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ABSTRACT

Carried out in Scotland, the project described in this book examined what Scottish parents want from preschool education and why. The first chapter describes the present situation of preschool education and how it serves different kinds of parents. Chapter II discusses the kinds of preschool provision desired by parents living in three different geographical areas. Parents' knowledge of and their preferences for the different types of existing preschool facilities are examined in Chapters III and IV. Chapter V examines the extent to which parents want to be involved in preschool activities and Chapter VI discusses the characteristics of people not using preschool facilities in their local area. Implications of the project's findings are discussed and a summary is provided in Chapters VII and VIII. The instruments used to collect data are included in appendices. (Author/MP)

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PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND CARE

BY

J HAYSTEAD, V HOWARTH, and A STRACHAN

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We would also like to thank the Lothian Region Education Department and Social Work Department for permission to carry out this study and for assistance and information; the Scottish Education Department and the Department of Education and Science who provided the finance; the Liaison Committee members listed below for their invaluable support; and the project secretary Hilary Thomson, for her indispensable contribution.

Members of the Nursery Education Liaison Committee at September 1979

HMCI Mr J G Morris (*Chairman*), Scottish Education Department
HMI Miss C Boyle, Scottish Education Department
Mrs N Drucker, University of Edinburgh
Mrs J Duncan, Scottish Education Department
Mrs C Gill, Parent representative
Mrs P Griffiths (succeeding Miss S Scales, Mr D A Robins, Mr R V Simons) Department of Education and Science
Mr I McFadyen, Lothian Region Education Department
Professor J Nisbet, University of Aberdeen
Mr J Ogden, Social Work Services Group
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Mrs S Yuill (succeeding Mr R Thayer), Lothian Region Social Work Department
Mrs H Johnston *(Secretary)* (succeeding Miss R Edmiston, Mrs A Flannigan), Scottish Education Department

FOREWORD

The pre-school years have not had their fair share of research in education. Although since the 1930s there was growing acceptance of the idea that the years before age five were of crucial importance, this belief was not put vigorously to the test, nor was there any systematic questioning of how best to provide appropriate experience and facilities. The Plowden Report of 1967 began to redress the balance: it reasserted the potential value of pre-school education, but also pointed out the significant lack of research evidence to help in the planning of its recommended expansion of provision.

In 1974, the Department of Education and Science and the Scottish Education Department initiated an ambitious programme of research on nursery education, with an allocation of half a million pounds. Concurrently, the Educational Research Board of the Social Science Research Council selected the pre-school period for the first of its research initiatives, allocating initially a total of £100,000 and subsequently doubling that amount. The Schools Council also had several projects in the field; and thus within a few years a substantial coordinated programme of work was under way.

The Committee set up by DES and SED identified five main regions which should be given priority in supporting research:

1. What parents want and why;
2. Coordination of services;
3. Parental involvement;
4. Continuity between nursery education and subsequent education;
5. Special needs of handicapped children.

The project described in this report was commissioned to investigate the first of these topics. Plowden had attempted to estimate the probable demand from parents for nursery education and suggested that 15 per cent of children between ages three and five would attend nursery schools on a full-time basis, and about 50 per cent of three-year-olds and a maximum of 90 per cent of four-year olds either full-time or part-time. But this estimate was little more than a blind guess, and Dr Haystead's project was designed to give a firmer basis for future planning.

At first sight, it may seem a rather easy assignment — needing merely a survey, in much the same way as a manufacturer might set up market research for a new soap powder. Anyone who thought that soon discovered how wrong he was. There is much more to the question than simply establishing a demand and providing a supply. The provision of education and care at the pre-school stage is not just a matter of creating a given number of standard places, for there is a variety of forms of provision and requirements vary widely even

within a single area. Nor is it just satisfying the current demand, for we have to anticipate future interests and try to match the provision with a range of different requirements.

The list of questions grows rapidly as we begin to inquire more closely. What do parents want? What do they know about existing provision? How far does it meet their needs and wants? What about those who do not take advantage of the provision? Why don't they use it — because it doesn't suit, or because they don't know about it, or don't want it, or misunderstand what it offers. Are present forms of nursery education the most appropriate?

One important finding from this research project is that there are very few cases where people are not using provision because of a lack of knowledge about it. With the possible exception of areas where there is a serious shortage (for this project was done in areas with at least average provision), the majority of mothers have a working knowledge of what is available locally if their children are the appropriate age. Even this statement needs qualification: they have enough knowledge to enable them to make use of the facility though they may not understand or accept the aims, the curriculum offered and the methods adopted. Also, they may not be clear about the different forms of pre-school provision — nursery schools, nursery classes, day care centres and play groups — which they tend to see as essentially the same. Perhaps (as Penelope Leach has suggested in *Who Cares*?) they are right to see the different forms as essentially the same, in that they are the same from the mothers' perspective. The differences which arouse concern among the professionals and the play group organisers may not be as important as we tend to assume.

It is necessary to go beyond existing attitudes and practice and ask what is likely to happen as understanding and knowledge improve? Can policy increase demand? An interesting feature of this project is that it included an experiment to test the effects of publicity. The researchers were fortunate in securing the collaboration of Lothian Region, for such an experiment requires courage from administrators and politicians. (Attempts to mount a test of this kind elsewhere in Britain were unsuccessful.) In fact, as the report shows, they were on fairly safe ground, for the area of study was one where the facilities were already competing for children. The experiment deserves to be repeated in a less well supplied area.

The results from the project are important in many ways, not just in providing answers to questions but also in clarifying the issues. The report is of interest not only to planners and administrators but also to all who are involved in pre-school education and care. It is important that they should understand public perceptions of what they offer, and a careful reading will help them to see themselves as others see them. But I hope that it will also be read by parents (and the

text is not one of these forbidding research papers but a live account of schools and groups and mothers and their children). For it will help parents to understand what is available, and how best to use the facilities, and perhaps also to understand themselves and their children more fully.

The research initiative by DES and SED of which this is a part is now nearing completion. Results from other parts of the programme will fit in with the research reported here. For example, Barbara Tizard's project in London on parent involvement in nursery education is producing results which complement (and are illuminated by) the results of this project in the east of Scotland. Consequently, by 1981 we shall be much better informed, and better prepared for action, than in 1967 when Plowden reported. It is ironical that we did not have information when we needed it, and when we have it we have lost the opportunity for action. For the context of this research has changed dramatically. When the project was first discussed it was against the background of proposals for expansion: how far and how fast could we go? Now with growth halted, a falling birthrate and empty classrooms in primary schools, the question is one of priorities. However, the issues with which this research deals are still there to be tackled, and the evidence which the research provides is relevant in spite of changing circumstances.

The change in the economic climate is not the only change, perhaps not even the most important in the long term. Is the role of playgroups changing in a situation where there is adequate state provision in schools or classes, at least for four-year-olds? Does the provision suit working mothers? Can it adapt to changing employment trends? Does it cater for mothers with special needs? These are still live issues, part of the larger question, what form should nursery education take? "Nursery education for all" does not mean education authority provision for everybody in the form in which it currently exists. We need a range of offerings (and some idea of the relative proportions in the demand for each kind). The different parts of pre-school education must fit together more effectively, in sequence and with continuity in a coherent programme for the under fives which combines with the preceding stage of family care and the subsequent stage of early primary school.

This is no small task, and the research reported here is only a start. Its contribution to the task of working out a programme for the under fives is that it clarifies basic issues in parental response to pre-school education, and thus has a relevance far beyond the shifting circumstances of the present day.

JOHN NISBET

Aberdeen, September 1979.

1

WHAT DO PEOPLE GET IN SCOTLAND?

Child-care gap affects 40% of mothers

Nursery hopes 'non existent'

★More nurseries for the under-fives and extended hours playgroups which fit into working hours.

Reading headlines such as the above in national newspapers and magazines can be quite misleading to parents who are not able to interpret them in terms of their own requirements and their own local situation. In this chapter, I am going to try to bridge the gap between such statements as these and the actual situation facing particular kinds of parents living in Scotland. What is relevant to the parents of under-5's is whether or not there are vacancies in the type of pre-school facilities which they require within a reasonable travelling distance from their homes.

The first headline above was followed by an explanation that the Equal Opportunities Commission in a publication called 'I want to work — but what about the kids?'[1] had said that an enormous gap in child care provision meant that thousands of women who wanted to work could not do so. This statement was based on data from national samples and quoted national figures of attendance, namely that 18% of under-5's attend playgroups and 10% nursery schools

[1] Equal Opportunities Commission, *I want to work ... but what about the kids?*, Manchester, 1978.

TABLE I

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGED 3-5 (NOT AT PRIMARY SCHOOL) IN NURSERY SCHOOLS, CLASSES AND PLAYGROUPS, AND PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGED 0-5 (NOT AT PRIMARY SCHOOL) IN DAY NURSERIES AND WITH CHILDMINDERS, BY REGION AT 1ST MARCH 1978

Region[1]	*Nursery schools or classes*[2]	*Private nurseries and playgroups*[3]	*Number of children 3-5 years*[5]	*LA day nurseries/ daycarers/ child centres*	*Child-minders*	*Number of children 0-5 years*
Strathclyde	28%	25%	59,204	1%	0.6%	150,463
Lothian	42%	35%	17,599	2%	1%	42,911
Grampian	24%	43%	11,315	1%	0.7%	28,790
Tayside	21%	41%	9,610	2%	0.4%	23,325
Fife	35%	28%	8,864	0.4%	1%	21,609
Central	25%	36%	6,314	2%	0.7%	16,317
Highland	6%	49%[4]	4,659	—	0.5%	12,482
Dumfries & Galloway	8%	41%	3,185	—	0.1%	7,918
Borders	13%	63%	2,217	—	0.6%	5,505
Western Isles	27%	46%	565	—	—	1,927
Shetland	9%	76%	638	—	—	1,717
Orkney	—	100%	491	—	0.1%	1,218
Scotland	29%	32%	124,786	1%	0.6%	314,182

1 Regions are ordered in terms of size of population aged 0-5 years.

2 The percentage of children attending nursery schools and classes includes children in independent and grant-aided schools. It is arbitrarily assumed that those aged 4 and under in the independent sector are receiving nursery education. The number of children attending nursery schools and classes is expressed as a percentage of the number of children living in the region, excluding those children who had already started primary school.

3 This category includes industrial nurseries and private nurseries as they have to register with the Social Work Department the same as playgroups in premises or playgroups in homes, and are voluntary provision.

4 Estimated 20 children attending each playgroup as exact figures not known.

5 The figures are approximate only. We have taken the number of 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds, in the education authority sector only, at September 1977, from the estimated population 3-5 or 0-5 at June 1978, and divided it by the number of children attending facilities at March 1978.

and classes, 9.7% local authority day nurseries, 0.6% private nurseries and 1% spend the day with a registered childminder.

In Scotland, the chances parents have of gaining a place in different kinds of pre-school facilities depend on the region in which they live (Table 1). Present provision for children of pre-school age takes several forms, the principal ones being nursery schools and classes, day nurseries, playgroups and childminding arrangements. Nursery schools, which are the responsibility of the local authority education department, provide full-time or part-time sessions within school hours for children aged 3 to 5 years. Nursery classes are attached to local authority primary schools and grant-aided and independent schools. On the other hand, day nurseries are a social work department responsibility and are staffed largely by nursery nurses. They provide full-time or part-time day-care, during normal working hours, for children from six weeks old to school age who need to be looked after away from home. They provide short-term and long-term care to relieve a difficult family situation such as financial stress; poor housing; mother, father or child's ill-health; child at risk; or a one parent family. Playgroups are voluntary associations but may receive help and assistance from the department of social work and, in some cases, from the education department. Children's centres are the result of a desire to bring together the range of facilities and for a joint education and social work department venture.

Nursery schools and classes

The article under the heading 'Nursery hopes "non-existent" '[2] explained that Mr Fred Smithies, Assistant General Secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers had said that the shortage of nursery school places in Britain is "a scandal". He did make distinctions between different local authorities in England.

> "Even in authorities where provision is considered good — like Inner London, Bedfordshire and Newcastle — only one 3-year-old in 10 and one 4-year-old in 4 has any chance of a place. In other authorities, like Bromley and Wiltshire, the chances of nursery education are so remote as to be practically non-existent. In Gloucestershire there is no nursery provision."

Local authorities, who provide the majority of places, adopt different policies towards the provision of nursery education. A parent living in Lothian region is in a very favourable position

[2] Haydon, C., "Nursery hopes 'non-existent' ", *Times Educational Supplement*, 21st April, 1978.

compared with a parent living in any other region of Scotland, except Fife. In regions such as Highland, Dumfries and Galloway, Borders, Western Isles, Shetland and Orkney it is not easy to provide nursery education facilities because the population is so scattered. However, it is a matter of policy as well as practicalities.

Highland region not only had the second lowest percentage of children attending nursery schools and classes, but had two nursery classes not operating at March 1978. It stated, however, in response to our questionnaire[3]:

> "It may be of interest to you to know that when the Education Committee of this region recently reviewed its priorities it decided that nursery education could not be given a high ranking in that context."

This authority was reviewing its priorities in the context of cuts in central government funds by the Labour government in 1977.[4] These had not only led to a lack of expansion but, in some regions, actually to a contracting of nursery education facilities. Orkney, for example, closed a nursery class attached to each of two primary schools.[5] Some regions had nursery units planned when specific money was being made available by central government but did not go ahead when this was withdrawn. For example, the Shetland Islands who had four nursery schools and one nursery class at the planning stage, made the following statement on our questionnaire.

> "We have an ongoing programme of nursery provision when buildings/finance become available."

Similarly Fife outlined their policy as follows.

---

3 Every local authority Education and Social Work Department in Scotland was asked to complete a questionnaire. They were asked to list current and projected facilities and to generally outline policy at March 1978. They were also asked to send us any relevant documents. The response was very varied. Some answered our questions fully, others gave only limited assistance. After several reminders three Social Work Departments refused to complete our questionnaires and a limited amount of information had to be obtained from official sources.

4 However, by the time the regions were sent a copy of their analysis for their approval in summer 1979, Highland region had expanded its facilities to such an extent that they felt that the picture should be brought up to date. 12 new nursery classes providing 240 places, and 2 new nursery schools providing 140 places, had opened.

5 Orkney Islands Council Education Department responded to our invitation to the departments to bring the position up to date as follows, "In 1977 the Education Authority's policy of reinstatement of Nursery Education was initiated and the two classes restarted. On the opening of a new school in Evie a third class was started, and with the availability of accommodation in Kirkwall, it is hoped to start another two classes in September. The provision in Evie and Kirkwall together will make provision for approximately 100 additonal places."

> "The policy of the Education Authority is to expand nursery provision to meet the demand from parents. The main thrust of this expansion will be in classes attached to primary schools."

Others had only limited plans for expansion even before financial limitations assumed such importance. For example, the Borders region's seven nursery classes were all open before this time and at March 1978 they had only one nursery class planned but not yet operational and another currently being used as infant accommodation. In Grampian region, twelve new units, all planned by the former authorities before regionalisation, had not been staffed and their conversion and building programme was postponed indefinitely. Tayside had three nursery schools and five nursery classes built but not operating and none at the planning stage.[6] The Directors of Social Work and Education, in a joint report, recommended the following non-expansionist policy

> "In the current period of financial stringency, effort should be concentrated on rationalising and preserving nursery school and day nursery provision, extending self-help, voluntarism and multipliers in pre-school provision, and correcting the geographical imbalance in provision ... It is recommended that the region in the short term sustain nursery schools and units and day nurseries at least at their existing levels of provision. The new nursery schools and units should be occupied as soon as possible, if necessary at the expense of vacating some of the older units, which might be transferred to voluntary bodies."

The larger regions have more nursery schools and classes in their centres of population because of the way that funds have been made available for such provision in 'disadvantaged' areas through urban aid programmes and in line with policy directives when the last Conservative government made specific money available in 1974. This applies particularly to Glasgow and Strathclyde region but, for example, Fife region's representative stated that, with one or two exceptions, all the more disadvantaged areas had reasonable provision of nursery education. Similarly, existing nursery units in Central region were largely situated in disadvantaged areas.

The point I am illustrating is that the chance parents have of getting a place in a local authority nursery school or nursery class is dependent on the level of provision in, and the policy of, the region in

[6] One of the newly-built large nursery schools was brought into commission in August 1978 at the expense of closing an old, small nursery school. This provided an additional 80 places.

which they live. A higher percentage of children are attending such units in the larger, more industrialised, regions in Scotland. In most cases it is mothers living in urban areas who will not find it difficult to get a place whereas mothers living in rural areas of any region will find it more problematic. I shall illustrate this with the example of Lothian region since this is the area in which we have carried out our study of parental demand.

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGED 3-5 (NOT AT PRIMARY SCHOOL) IN NURSERY SCHOOLS, CLASSES AND PLAYGROUPS, AND PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN AGED 0-5 (NOT AT PRIMARY SCHOOL) IN DAY NURSERIES AND WITH CHILDMINDERS, BY DISTRICT WITHIN LOTHIAN REGION AT 1ST MARCH 1978

District	*Nursery schools or classes*	*Private nurseries and playgroups*	*Number of children 3-5 years*	*LA day nurseries/ daycarers*	*Child-minders*	*Number of children 0-5 years*
Edinburgh	47%	32%	10,463	4%	2%	24,169
Midlothian	28%	44%	2,163	1%	0.6%	5,547
East Lothian	46%	40%	1,690	1%	0.1%	4,231
West Lothian	29%	34%	3,283	—	1%	8,964

Edinburgh has traditionally been well provided with nursery schools and classes (Table 2).[7] There are now pockets of under-provision but also pockets of over-provision. West Lothian, on the other hand, which contains the second largest urban area in Lothian region, namely Livingston New Town, had very little nursery education provision before money was specifically made available for it in 1974. West Lothian then doubled its number of nursery units placing them in disadvantaged areas. Whereas, generally in Scotland

[7] The position at May 1979 is as follows. The number of children attending nursery schools and classes in Edinburgh is 5,574 compared with 4,706 at March 1978; in Midlothian, 727 compared with 610; in East Lothian, 944 compared with 762; and in West Lothian, 1,396 compared with 947. West Lothian's representative stated that the position at August 1979 was 1,430 and in addition three more nursery schools are due to be completed in 1980. Two of these will be in Livingston. The increase in figures is due, in part, to the opening of new units, but also to the fact that where there is spare capacity the later in the year that the figures are taken, the higher the numbers, because children enter when they become old enough. The percentages for different divisions are not exactly comparable because children can attend for different numbers of sessions. For example, in East Lothian it is likely that children attend for less than five half day sessions per week whereas this would be unusual in the other three divisions.

and within the Lothian region,[8] the primary school population is decreasing, the situation within West Lothian is different from the national and regional trend, mainly because of Livingston. Livingston had only two nursery schools and one nursery class at March 1978 despite the fact that a large proportion of the families moving into the area had young children.

In East Lothian the development of nursery provision was dramatic. In 1973 there were no nursery units and in 1977 there were seven. By March 1978 there were ten nursery units altogether. One of these was a pioneering attempt to bring children to a nursery class in a primary school serving a rural hinterland. Another seven nursery units were at the planning stage when the cuts in educational expenditure were made and the allocation was withheld. Midlothian, like East Lothian, is a largely rural area. The four nursery schools and five nursery classes are situated in the main centres of population. Once again, they were all opened after the government had made specific money available.

The figures in Table 2 are a clear indication that opportunities for pre-school education are widely different for children living in the more rural and the more urban areas of Lothian region. However, the picture is not as simple as might be expected because of the recent rapid expansion in East Lothian, a largely rural area, and because of the poor percentage of places for children in West Lothian. As I have indicated in the discussion, in places where the population is expanding rapidly it is likely that there will be a shortage of facilities at the very least until they can be planned, built and staffed but at the worst, and in the economic climate of summer 1979, for a considerably longer period than this.

Day nurseries, daycarers and child centres

The statement made in 'Woman's Own'[9] under the third heading at the beginning of this chapter was as follows.

> "A quarter of working mothers have to work for economic reasons, but only 1 in 50 has found a place in a nursery school or a holiday play centre."

---

[8] Estimates of children aged 0-5:

West Lothian	1977 —	11,915
	1978 —	11,717
Edinburgh	1977 —	32,525
	1978 —	29,812
East Lothian	1977 —	5,806
	1978 —	5,482
Midlothian	1977 —	7,622
	1978 —	7,126

[9] Sanders, D., "What You Say About Our Fair Deal for Mum Campaign", *Woman's Own*, 31st March 1979.

This is misleading in the implication that the reason for this situation is that there are not enough nursery schools or nursery classes, when the reason for many is likely to be that they do not want a place because such a facility would not provide care for their child for suitable hours for them to work.

Unless mothers are working for just the few hours a day that a child would attend a nursery school or playgroup, taking children to such places does not solve the mothers' child care problems. In fact, taking children to and from such facilities may increase their difficulties. Local authority day nurseries, daycarers and child centres represent the only form of free, or low cost, full-day care in Scotland. These have definite criteria of eligibility.[10] The percentage of 0-5's with places is extremely small (Table 1). Half the regions do not have any such places. Mothers who are given places for their children for other reasons may, in fact, work. However, for the majority of mothers working or needing to work, local authority day nurseries are not a possibility. They may find relatives to help with the care of their children by, for example, working alternative shifts with their husbands or getting the children's grandparents to collect them from nursery school and so on. They may take their children to a childminder. They may pay for help in the home in the form of a nanny or au pair. A few may take them to work with them and leave them in an industrial nursery or creche or take them into the work situation.[11] Finally, they may take them to a private nursery.

There are very few industial and private nurseries in Scotland. For example, Lothian region has three nurseries registered but not open to the general public providing 60 places. Two of them are run by the University and one is in a children's hospital. Strathclyde region has eighteen private nurseries registered in Glasgow providing 450 places and five registered in Lanark division providing 166 places.[12] Fife has one industrial nursery in Dunfermline providing 20 places. Tayside has five industrial nurseries in Dundee and in Perth, giving a total of 404 places.

At March 1978, there were no local authority day nursery facilities in Highland, Dumfries and Galloway, Borders, Western Isles, Shetland or Orkney regions. In Lothian region 94% of such places were in Edinburgh and 6% in a day nursery in East Lothian. In an attempt to increase the number of children that could be cared for and because such day nursery places are not always appropriate,

[10] Day nurseries are for children from 6 weeks to school age who need to be looked after during the day away from home. They provide short-term or long-term care to relieve a difficult family situation, such as financial stress; poor housing; mother, father or child's health; child at risk; or one-parent family.

[11] A few case studies are described in *Woman*, 10th July 1979.

[12] The position at August 1979 is 22 private nurseries altogether providing 596 places.

Lothian region began a daycarers scheme. The Social Work Department defines daycarers as follows.

> "Daycarers are approved people with skills similar to foster parents who can provide substitute day care for children who might be at risk of coming into the statutory care of the Department under Section 15, of the Social Work (Scotland) Act."

Edinburgh district had 103 daycarers caring for 191 children, Midlothian had 30, East Lothian had 2 caring for 2 children and West Lothian had none. At the time, Central region stated that they intended to develop schemes for retained childminding throughout the region, for the following reason.

> "Due to the very great demand for day nursery places a strict priority system is in force in all day nurseries . . . There may well be cogent reasons for parental employment, and existing numbers of childminders are inadequate to cover full-day care for children in these circumstances."

However, this was the only way in which future provision was expected to differ from existing services.

Grampian region refers to their day nurseries as pre-school day centres and their representative stated the following with respect to the adequacy of the level of provision.

> "71% of the children catered for within the Pre-School Day Centres are children of unsupported mothers whether separated, divorced, deserted or unmarried. Although the number of places provided within the Region is in excess of the provision suggested by the Social Work Services group guidelines, the present economic constraints which limit nursery education expansion will undoubtedly bring increasing pressure to bear on Day Care places. There is already a waiting list of 'priority' cases in excess of 250."

In this region discussions were taking place on the subject of new developments, namely the co-ordination of the Education and Social Work Department provision. Similar discussions were taking place in various other regions. They usually centred on the topic of Children's Centres.

At March 1978, Fife had four 'Child Centres' run jointly by the Social Work and Education Departments instead of day nurseries.[13]

[13] Although the percentage of children attending these centres was 1.5% of the children aged 0-5 years in the region, only 1% has been put in this column so as not to count some children twice. In fact, 26% of the children attending them were younger than three years and six months, and 74% were older and could thus be expected to be receiving nursery education. The same principle has been adopted with the children's centres in other regions.

> "They incorporate both Nursery School and Day Nursery facilities, aim to develop the Centre's use beyond what has been understood as Day Nursery and Nursery School Provision and give support, encouragement and stimulus to the family."

A number of places are for children referred by members of the Department's local Social Work teams. There is provision for children who may require day care over extended hours.[14]

Whilst most of Tayside's full-day provision was in the form of day nurseries there was one 'Pre-School Centre', a joint Education and Social Work Department venture. The Senior Primary Adviser who completed our questionnaire on behalf of the Education Department, made the following comment.

> "At the present moment the rigidity of hours worked by nursery assistants in nursery schools makes it impossible for working mothers to benefit from that provision in some urban areas. The obvious answer lies in the development of a more flexible organisation of pre-school provision by authorities and this could embrace all the good features of the present disparate groups who offer some form of pre-school provision. There are obvious financial, educational, staffing and training implications in this type of flexible organisation but it would appear to cater for the needs of the future."

Strathclyde region, according to the Social Work Department, intends to improve standards of care and develop local authority day nurseries to meet wider community needs and identify areas of unmet demand. The representative who completed our questionnaire said that he personally saw a need for more local authority provision, for example, paid childminders or day care foster parents.[15] Similarly, a report for the Directors of Education and Social Work produced in February 1978 sought the approval of the education and social work committees for the principle of establishing children's centres run jointly by the Social Work and Education departments. Already one such centre had opened as part of an urban aid project.[16]

Lothian region had a working party preparing a written policy statement which, according to their education department representative, was likely to suggest the development of joint

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[14] Watt, J. S., *Pre-School Education and the Family*, distributed by the Department of Education, University of Aberdeen, 1976.

[15] In fact at the time of writing, September 1979, Strathclyde region are advertising for childminders and a pilot daycaring scheme is in operation.

[16] A second such centre opened in April 1978.

Education and Social Work Department family centres with extensive counselling services.[17]

Childminders

The percentage of children spending the day with childminders is the least accurate figure in Table 1. There are two difficulties. The first concerns the definition of childminders and the second concerns the difficulty of getting people to register and to inform the Social Work Department of changes in the number of children they are looking after. A childminder is required to be registered with the local authority Social Work Department, under the Nurseries and Childminders' Act, 1948, amended by the Health Services and Public Health Act, 1968. Representatives of this department try to ensure that she is a suitable person and that she is living in suitable accommodation. Anyone who is not a relative and who looks after a child for more than two hours a day for reward, is legally required to be registered. Payment is a private arrangement between the mother and the childminder. Most authorities provided us with figures concerning the number of children that registered childminders could take. However, Tayside and Orkney provided up-to-date numbers of children with each childminder at March 1978. For large regions with a high proportion of registered childminders, keeping up to date is a daunting task.

Lothian region Social Work Department's representative stated that there was a waiting list of people wanting to register as childminders. There was no explicit statement about whether there was an unmet demand for such childminders. It was suspected that there are some unregistered childminders within the region but no attempt was made to assess the extent.

Fife region, the other region where the percentage of children looked after by childminders reached 1%, felt that the adequacy of provision varied from area to area. For example, it might be difficult for a family in an outlying area to obtain the services of a childminder. Whilst there were undoubtedly some unregistered childminders, their representative said that the recent B.B.C. programme, 'Other People's Children', appeared to have alerted people to the fact that it was necessary for childminders to be registered. A number of people had applied just after the programme had been televised. A new poster has been produced and is being

[17] The position at September 1979 in Lothian region was that Social Work Department day nurseries had changed their name to 'Children's Centres' and, apparently, their orientation from child-focused, to family-focused and community based. Two new Children's Centres have opened providing an additonal 78 places.

displayed throughout the region in an attempt to further publicise the need for registration.

Even though the overall percentage of children with childminders in Tayside region was only 0.3%, their Social Work Department representative stated that in some areas provision is more than adequate. It was thought that there were some unregistered childminders but probably not many.

At one extreme, Strathclyde region, Central, Grampian and, at the other extreme, Orkney region stated that there were not enough childminders. Whereas Strathclyde and Central regions suspected that there were large numbers of unregistered minders, particularly within Glasgow, Orkney did not think that there were any.

Although the Western Isles had no childminders registered at March 1978, they were currently processing three or four. Their representative felt that "given the strong family support system in the area", the numbers of unregistered childminders must be small. Highland region's representative made a similar comment on the difficulty of defining the boundaries of childminding.

> "Childminders are adequate for demand created by ourselves, but there are probably many unregistered childminders. But how do you distinguish between a childminder and a helpful neighbour?"

Mothers living in areas where there is the possibility of employment are the most likely to be looking for full-day care for their child so that they can go to work either for personal or financial reasons. Thus these are the areas in which most childminders are found and probably where the most unregistered childminders go undetected. They are also the areas where they are most likely to be needed because of the lack of an extended family system to help with the care of the pre-school children.

Playgroups

Since playgroups often come into existence when a need is seen either within the community or by external bodies, we would expect them to be more numerous in areas where there is a shortage of other provision. Thus, according to the then Edinburgh Divisional Playgroup Adviser, the situation in Edinburgh is rather static because mothers are not thinking it necessary to start playgroups.

> "There are very few playgroups currently being set up. There has been very little growth over the last few years because there is adequate provision in Edinburgh. There are a great number of nursery schools and classes, and playgroups, in the city and, I would say, the provision is almost adequate at the moment."

As with local authority Education Department provision, however, there are still pockets of under provision.

> "There is a demand that we cannot meet in the Wester Hailes area. We have two playbuses out there at the moment helping to meet the need. The difficulty is that, although we have the interest from the mothers, there are no premises available for playgroups. But Wester Hailes, I'd say, is just about the only area where there's a terrific demand that we can't meet."

Because playgroups arise in areas where there is a shortage of nursery school provision, within Lothian region a high percentage of children attend them in Midlothian and West Lothian where lower percentages attend nursery schools and classes (Table 2). They have generally been seen as a complementary type of provision which could exist in areas where there were not enough children to justify providing nursery schools or classes. Thus, they have tended to predominate in rural areas, such as many parts of East, West and Midlothian. However, they are not the ideal substitute for everybody. The playgroup advisers for East Lothian pointed out that within the main centres of population there are certain areas where families with multiple problems can be found. It is too much to expect such mothers to bring their children along and participate in playgroup activities particularly since they are probably not entirely convinced of the benefit of such an experience. However, the children need some kind of educational stimulation outside the home if they are not to be at a disadvantage when they start school. Nursery schools and classes may be more suitable than playgroups for such families.

Increasingly it is being considered desirable to have a nursery unit place for everybody that wants one provided it is practicable. Theoretically, the mothers are thus given a choice. However, in East Lothian again, a playgroup closed when a nursery class opened in a primary school in a village. The Divisional Education Officer, in the following quotation, explains how he saw voluntary and education authority provision as co-existing for different age groups of children. However, not everyone liked this idea.

> "I regarded Play Groups as the bottom tier in the more formal socialisation and education process, to be followed by the Nursery School, then the Infant section and then the Primary School. This process could possibly start at age two to three years."

Similarly, in West Lothian recently the Education Authority has spent money on new nursery units rather than on giving financial

assistance to voluntary groups. This has nevertheless been forthcoming from the Social Work Department. Resentment has sometimes been unnecessarily generated by a lack of communication and consultation with respect to the placement of such nursery units particularly where an existing playgroup feels threatened. However, in the event, no playgroup has had to close because of competition from nursery units although its composition may have changed.

Midlothian is well provided with playgroups but illustrates another problem. Some villages have playgroups and mother-and-toddler groups combined because this is the only way that they can get enough children. A danger then is that pressure is exerted on mothers to take their children so that the playgroup can survive.

> "My husband said four. Wait till he's four and he'd get about a year before he went to the school. But down at (playgroup in a small village) they're very short of children and they're trying to make up the numbers. They were really keen for children coming when they're wee-er than that."[18]

Some playgroups in premises had to close because there were not enough children to cover rental and heating charges which could be £2 per morning. The maximum assistance from the local authority was £1.33 and a condition of grant-aid was that the fees are reduced to 10p per session so that every child had the opportunity to attend. The playgroup adviser for this district felt that ideally, playgroups should be free, the same as education authority provision, if the mother is really to have a choice of provision. Even community playgroups can be expensive for the mother with more than one child in the family attending.

The percentage of children aged between 3 and 5 years attending playgroups, at the regional level (Table 1), illustrates the phenomenon of playgroups being more common in areas where there is no other provision, and in predominantly rural areas. Thus there are high percentage attendances in Highland, Borders, Shetland and Orkney. (Orkney, in particular, also illustrates the fact that children younger than 3 years old are attending playgroups to maintain sufficient numbers.)

Grampian and Tayside regions stand out as areas in which there is comparatively low Education Authority provision and high voluntary provision. Grampian region stated the following in a discussion paper they produced in 1977.[19]

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[18] This quotation is taken from a mother interviewed in our study described Appendix 1.

[19] Department of Education and Department of Social Work, *Under-5 in Grampian*, 1977.

> "In the current economic situation the best prospects of meeting demand probably lie in forms of provision which rely mainly on existing accommodation and make the maximum use of skilled voluntary help. One cannot deny the far greater expertise that is available in nursery schools and classes yet equally parental participation in the playgroup movement is educative and stimulating not only for the children but also for the parents with consequent benefits accruing to the wider community."

However, a Workers' Educational Association — Aberdeen People's Press publication[20] produced in response to this discussion paper, stressed that spending on all kinds of pre-school care had been cut by Grampian region. In particular, with respect to this discussion, they pointed out that Local Authority grants to playgroups had been cut and that the grant to the Scottish Pre-School Playgroup Association for 1977 was cut from £1,500 to £1,000 on the grounds that they would find fund raising easier now that they had become an established organisation. This document made the following claim.

> "Unwillingness to spend money on pre-school care has led the local authority to stress the 'flexible approach' to child care; the shift to the voluntary sector is not being made because it provides 'better' care — for Grampian region, it provides *cheaper* care."

In fact, between the time that the Grampian region produced their discussion paper in 1977 and March 1978, fifteen new playgroups had been set up.

This policy of Grampian region was the step forward suggested at a national level at a joint conference of the Department of Social Security and the Department of Education and Science, at Sunningdale Park, in January 1976, entitled 'Low Cost Day Provision for the Under-Five's'. It is summarised by Dr David Owen, M.P., at that time Minister of State (Health), in the foreword to the published papers, as follows.[21]

> "The theme is 'low cost', we did not meet to discuss the desirable, we want to grapple with the attainable ...
> We could improve the provision for 0 to 5's substantially by spreading the low cost best practice which already exists, proven and documented on the ground. I suggest this spreading of best practice should now be our central objective."

[20] Workers' Educational Association — Aberdeen People's Press publication, *Pre-School Child Care in Aberdeen.*

[21] D.H.S.S., D.E.S., *Low Cost Day Provision For The Under-Fives*, H.M.S.O., 1976.

There were dissenters at the national level, for example, Jack Tizard, is quoted below.[22]

> "I do not share the widely held view that we have no choice but to cut back on the nursery programme and concentrate on 'selective' services. Nor do I think that an expansion of childminding and playgroups will take us far towards the solution of the pressing problems of the under fives and their families. The cuts are being justified on economic grounds; but they also reflect political priorities."

The percentage of children in Tayside region in our category attending playgroups, is increased relative to other regions because of the inclusion of industrial and private day nurseries. The 304 children who attend these six places in Dundee add nearly 3% to the total. 80 children attend E.P.A. playgroups in Dundee run by the Education Department, and there are just over 1000 places in pre-school playgroups supported by the Education Department. Most education authorities now have little connection with playgroups. Apart from Tayside, it is only in Borders, Shetland, Fife and Lothian regions that they are eligible for limited financial support. For example, in Lothian region the Education Committee spent £23,000 in 1975-6, £26,000 in 1976-7 and £8,000 in 1977-8 on training courses and equipment for playgroups.

The variations within regions in the availability of playgroup places is emphasised by the Fife region Social Work Department representative.

> "Due to various factors, for example, changes in the community, drop in the birth rate and the development of Education Authority nursery schools and classes there has been a decline in some areas in the number of children attending. A few playgroups have had to close during the past year, and others are anxious about their future. Enquiries, though fewer in number, are still being received for help in the setting up of new groups."

Central region's representative felt that there are probably sufficient playgroups in the region taken as a whole. The urbanised district of Falkirk was given as an example of an area where playgroups have closed because of low numbers of young children and long distances to be travelled. They, like East Lothian, referred to the lack of support given to playgroups by local communities in some disadvantaged areas. Their solution is to provide additional paid help.

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[22] D.H.S.S., D.E.S., "Ten Comments On Low Cost Day Care For The Under-Fives", in Low Cost Day Provision For The Under-Fives, I.M.S.O., 1976, Page 43.

Apart from the Livingston area of West Lothian, the only region to admit to a shortage of playgroups at a general level was Strathclyde. Their representative stated that in most areas there is a shortage of playgroups. One of the difficulties, as in Livingston, is the lack of suitable premises. The region intended to continue its financial support to the Pre-School Playgroup Association through direct grants and urban aid programmes where these were appropriate.

The foregoing discussion suggests the following. There are different levels of pre-school provision in different parts of Scotland. There are not only differences between regions, but also between divisions and within divisions of each region. This is partly because of geographical and physical limitations but also because of different priorities and policies of the former authorities, and currently the regions, and the efficiency with which they have utilised money made available by central government. In the next section, I intend to examine the effect on families with pre-school children living in different kinds of areas within Lothian region.

The local situation

We asked parents about the facilities that they used, had used or would like to use for their pre-school children and related this to the kind of facilities that existed in the areas in which they lived.[23] We chose three geographically distinct areas to study, namely city centre, outskirts of the city and rural. This distinction took into account the type and amount of pre-school facilities in the area and the availability of work for women in the immediate vicinity. We purposely selected socially mixed areas.

Edinburgh is very well provided with local authority nursery schools and classes. This makes it an interesting place to study in the sense that considerable pressure exists in Britain in general to reach the position that Edinburgh has now almost attained. That is, a nursery school place for every child whose parents wish him to attend. It is not quite the position now because there are areas where there is a shortage and areas where there is over provision. It affords the opportunity of looking at a situation of relatively high provision and seeing if this is what people want.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 indicate the facilities available in the primary school catchment areas that we studied and the number of pre-school children living in these catchment areas who went to each. Whereas the city centre area and the outskirts area had a variety of provision, only one village had a nursery class and the others had either a playgroup or no provision.

There were more playgroups within easy reach of children living in our city centre area than in the area on the outskirts of the city.

[23] This study is described in Appendix I.

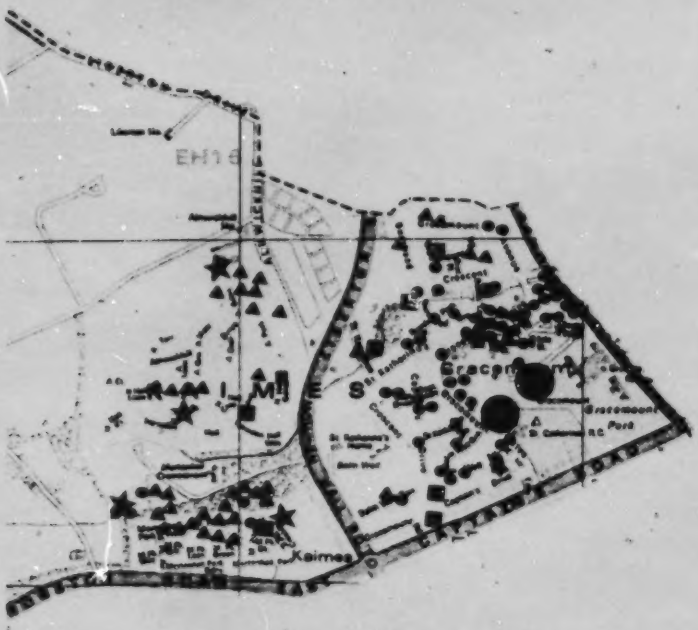
FIGURE I

CHILDREN ATTENDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES IN CITY CENTRE AREA

- Stockbridge Nursery Class
- children attending
- London Street Nursery Class
- children attending
- Children attending local authority nursery units outside area
- Children attending private nursery unit outside area
- Children attending day nurseries outside area (including one private day nursery)
- Children attending childminders
- Catchment area boundary
- International Playgroup
- children attending
- Dublin Street Playgroup
- children attending
- Stockbridge Playgroup
- children attending
- Bell-Ramsay Playgroup
- children attending
- Children attending community playgroups outside area
- Children attending private playgroups outside area

FIGURE 2

CHILDREN ATTENDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES IN OUTSKIRTS AREA



- Gracemount Nursery Class children attending
- Children attending Liberton Nursery School
- Children attending local authority nursery units outside area
- Children attending day nurseries outside area (including one private day nursery)
- Children attending daycarers
- Burdiehouse Playgroup children attending
- [illegible]ren attending private [illegible]groups outside area

FIGURE 3

CHILDREN ATTENDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES IN RURAL AREAS

Therefore, more parents living in the city centre area took their children to playgroups.[24] Playgroups take younger children than do nursery schools and classes which predominate in the outskirts area. Therefore, more of the younger age-group used pre-school facilities in the city centre area. However, this relationship did not reach statistical significance.[25] The outskirts area had an ample supply of nursery school and class places and so this was the type of facility most likely to be used. On the other hand, people living in the villages were more likely to live near a playgroup and this was, therefore, the facility they were most likely to use (Table 3).

It was stated above that we chose socially mixed areas with, as far as possible, an example of each kind of facility. It is important to bear this in mind when examining Table 3. This table indicates that 60% of the 3-5 year olds (who were not at primary school) living in the city centre area were currently attending a nursery school or class; 61% of the same category living in the outskirts of the city area went to a nursery school or class; and 27% of this category living in the villages that we studied attended a nursery school or class. In addition, 17% of the age-group 2½-3 years living in the outskirts area, and 4% of this category living in the villages, went to a nursery school or class.

TABLE 3

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN NOT AT PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRENTLY ATTENDING DIFFERENT PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES, BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

	Nursery units	*Playgroups*	*Day nurseries/ daycarers*	*Childminders*
	%	%	%	%
3-5 age-group				
City centre area	60	31	3	2
Outskirts area	61	12	6	—
Villages	27	53	—	—
2½-3 age-group				
City centre	—	35	2	1
Outskirts area	17	10	2	1
Villages	4	7	—	—
2-2½ age-group				
City Centre area	—	21	—	—
Outskirts area	—	—	—	—
Villages	—	—	—	—

[24] Chi Sq = 15.1. P is less than 0.1%.
[25] Chi Sq = 3.24. P is less than 10%.

Most of the 3-5 year old age-group who did not attend a nursery unit went to a playgroup. The number varied according to the availability of nursery units. Thus, 53% of the 3-5 year olds living in the country attended playgroups. They were also attended by the 2½-3 year old age-group, particularly those living in the city centre. Further, 21% of the 2-2½ age-group who lived in the city centre, went to a playgroup.

Just as the supply of nursery units and playgroups influenced attendance at them so did the supply of local authority day nurseries. As there were none within easy reach of the mothers that we interviewed living in villages, none of them currently had day nursery places for their children. On the other hand, 3% of the children aged 3-5 living in the Edinburgh areas had places. In addition, 2% of the three to five-year-olds living in the city centre area and 3% living on the outskirts went to a daycarer or a childminder.

Although 15% of the three to five-year-olds in our sample were not currently using any pre-school facilities, most of them were likely to before they started primary school. Mothers of less than 4% did not intend taking them anywhere before they went to school. In half these cases the mother did not wish to take them. I quote from the interview with a mother of a three-year-old and a four-year-old.

> "I don't believe in nursery school. We go to ballet, Sunday School, Tufty club .... I don't see any need for them to have pre-school education as such — it's just playing together in a group. I feel they can play together at home. I put off time through the day. I play. I take them out. I see that they're amused and occupied. I don't see any need for anything outside."

In the other cases mothers did not take them anywhere because of a lack of knowledge about facilities or because of practical difficulties in taking and collecting the child. Because we were interviewing in areas chosen for their social class mix and where there were plenty of facilities, the numbers of non-users were low. A higher proportion of non-users were found when we turned our attention to a working class area. This is discussed in Chapter 6.

In sum, we found that most of the 3-5 year old children not in primary school were attending a nursery school or class or a playgroup. The question then arises — were they attending the facility of their choice or the only one available? I will take nursery units first. Most mothers said that they had managed to get their child into the nursery school or class of their choice. Mothers of only 6% of children currently attending this type of facility said that they would have preferred to take their child somewhere else. A different nursery school or class would have been preferred for just over half these

children and a different type of facility would have been preferred for the rest (4). Mothers of 3 children had tried to get places in another facility since they started taking them to the present nursery school or class.

Most mothers said that they had got their child into the playgroup of their choice. Mothers of 15% of the children in our sample currently attending playgroups said that they would have preferred to take them somewhere else. Although 10% of these would have preferred a different playgroup, the other 90% of them (18) would have preferred a different type of facility. 17 of them would have preferred a nursery school or class place and one a day nursery place. Two had tried to get places since the children started the place they are now attending. None of the mothers currently taking their children to a day nursery would have preferred to take them somewhere else, but 5 (out of 10) of the mothers taking their child to a daycarer said that they would prefer the child to go to the day nursery.

There was no social class difference in the preference for nursery units or playgroups. However, children of non-manual workers were more likely to be attending a nursery school than a nursery class[26] and children of manual workers were more likely to be attending a nursery class than a nursery school.[27] This, in fact, can be accounted for by the situation in the outskirts area studied. The nursery class in the area and a nursery school in the adjoining primary school catchment area, had very different intakes. 86% of the 35 children in our sample who attended the nursery school had non-manual fathers. 75% of the 40 children currently attending the nursery class had manual fathers. There was a definite preference amongst non-manual mothers for the nursery school even though it was marginally further away from most of them. Children of manual workers were more likely to be attending a day nursery than children of non-manual workers.[28]

Another indication of dissatisfaction with the available type of provision is the number of children who have changed from one to another, or just stopped going. 31% of the children in our sample who were currently using, or had used, some kind of provision had changed from one facility to another or to not using any provision. These 131 children, between them had made 151 moves. Sometimes they had to move because the place closed down (10%); they moved house (23%); they lost the place (7%); or because the facility was no longer suitable because of the hours, the travelling arrangements (12%), or a change in their family circumstances (6%).

[26] Chi Sq = 9.78. P is less than 0.2%.
[27] Chi Sq = 5.73. P is less than 5%.
[28] Chi Sq = 5.66. P is less than 5%.

However, some changes were voluntary. 5% changed from taking their child to a playgroup to not taking them anywhere. They said that they did not like taking them for some reason such as the following.

> "There was quite a lot of kids I used to see going to the playschool and they would cry and their Mums would leave them to cry. Well, I felt that was wrong. Well, I wouldn't have done it. I'd rather have taken him home. It's better him being happy at home than sad at playschool and me sitting here worrying about how he was getting on at playschool. So I felt he was happier at home."

Similarly, 3% took them away from a nursery class because they did not want them to go any more and without starting to take them anywhere else.

Some mothers moved their child from a nursery class to a playgroup (2%) or from a playgroup to a nursery unit (9%) because they preferred the second facility. Sometimes, in the latter case, they said that this was because they wanted their child to learn more.

> "I don't know, I've spoken to two or three mothers and I think in a, just a playgroup they do get bored towards, you know, after about 4, 4½, they start to need a little bit more constructive work."

However, other mothers moved their child from one playgroup to another playgroup for this same reason (4%).

11% of the changers moved their child from a playgroup to a nursery class because they saw this as the next step in the sequence of the child's career.

> "You see, I had it in mind that well, if he went to nursery, that's it, him settled down. It's not as though he's got two years at playschool and then say, 'Right you're going to school.' I felt that he was gradually getting him into the way of thinking that, well, he's at school now and all he has to do is move a classroom, so it would be a lot easier for him. I just had it in my mind, you know, playing and then to the school building, and still playing, as then he'll have a gradual progression."

Finally, some children moved from one playgroup to another (3%), or from one nursery unit to another (5%), because their mothers thought it would suit them better. An example of a child moving from one nursery unit to another is as follows.

> "That one down there is a what do you call it, open plan. And whether she felt insecure or not, but she hated it and she used

> to scream every time I took her . . . They've got three and a bit large rooms and they're allowed to just roam about, to go wherever they want to go, because they thought it was a good thing for them to do what they want, sort of. The teachers were there, right enough, but she was very shy and she didn't seem to mix very well at that one, you know."

In other words, some people do change between facilities if they are not satisfied with the one they are using, or if they think that something else would now suit their child better, and some localities have enough provision of different types to enable mothers to exercise this freedom of choice. In Scotland, in general, and Lothian in particular, the people who are unlikely to have much choice about which pre-school provision to use are, first, those living in villages or in isolated houses. They are unlikely to be able to take their child to anything other than a playgroup. The second group of people who are unlikely to have much choice are those living in some of the more 'disadvantaged', more highly populated, areas where there are large numbers of young families. For example, we can pick out Livingston New Town in West Lothian, Wester Hailes in Edinburgh and many parts of Glasgow and Strathclyde region. The third group of people who are unlikely to have much choice of pre-school provision are people, other than single parents or other priority cases, who require full-day care for their child. Apart from a handful of industrial day nurseries and a few private day nurseries, mothers who would like full-day care must come to a private arrangement with a childminder or relative. In fact, there are not enough local authority day nursery places even for people considered to be eligible. We shall look more closely at these groups in subsequent chapters.

2

WHO WANTS WHAT KIND OF PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION?

"A marked expansion in the provision of care for the under-5's outside their families has recently occurred in many countries, apparently due to two rather distinct causes. In the first place, there is a growing reluctance on the part of women to accept the entire responsibility for the care of their young children; they may want to go out to work or they may merely wish to be relieved of their children for a short period each day.

A quite separate reason for increased services for the under-fives is the widespread belief in government and administrative circles that the failure of many children within the school system is due to the short-comings of their parents as pre-school educators."[1]

The distinction between two sources of pressure for expansion of pre-school services made in the statement above by Barbara Tizard, is an extremely useful one to make from the point of view of explaining the complex relationship between demand and supply in the pre-school field. It suggests that whereas central government and local authorities have been concentrating on providing nursery schools and classes in disadvantaged areas because they believe it is the pre-school children living in such areas who ought to have some kind of educational experience outside the home, the parents of such children do not necessarily want them to have it. They may not be interested at all or they may be more interested in being relieved of the care of their children for a short while so that they can go out to work.

The interests of the mother, and the rest of the family, and the child are not necessarily in harmony. It is only because so many women

1 Barbara Tizard (1974) *Early Childhood Education*, 2nd edition, 1975, Slough, NFER, pages x-xi.

willingly stay at home to care for their young children that this conflict is not more evident. They need not necessarily be subsuming their own interests in favour of the children because they may genuinely find enjoyment and fulfilment in child rearing. Such mothers, nevertheless, may welcome the break provided them by their children attending a nursery school or a playgroup for part of the day particularly if they can feel that the child is benefiting from the experience. However, it is where mothers are not willingly full-time child rearers, or are forced by circumstance to find employment outside the home, that the conflict emerges if there is a lack of suitable facilities for the children to attend, or if mothers feel that they are not acting in the best interests of the children. In line with governmental policy, local authority full-day provision has not been open to mothers who did not have a very good reason for not wishing to look after their pre-school children themselves. Since the war, wishing to work has not been a good enough reason unless the parent is unmarried.

In this chapter I will discuss the pre-school provision that parents living in three types of areas in Lothian region say that they would like for their children.[2] I will start by looking at the length of time in each week that mothers would like their pre-school child to spend in a nursery unit, playgroup or day nursery. To do so I will examine responses to questions about this of mothers with children currently attending each kind of facility. They are therefore discussing the extent to which they have to fit into the existing system rather than telling us what they would ideally like. We must consider both sides of the coin. Given that many mothers of pre-school children are at home during the day, some may prefer their children to go for less time.

Number of days per week facility attended

The current position was that 86% of the children in our sample attending a nursery school or class did so on five days a week. This is the usual pattern after the initial settling down period. However, the nursery class in a rural area that we studied had a mixed pattern of attendance for children of different ages. 92% of the children attending a day nursery (a total of 12) went for five days a week. Only 38% of the children in our sample currently attending playgroups went on five days a week. 5% went on four days, 37% on three days, 19% on two days and 1% on one day.

Only 13% of the children attending playgroups, according to their mothers, could go for more days and 3% of the children attending a nursery unit. Only one child went to a day nursery for less than five

[2] This study is described in Appendix 1.

days and she could have gone for five days if her parents had wanted her to.

Some mothers would have preferred their children to attend the nursery unit (5%) or the playgroup (15%) on more days a week than they currently did because they thought it would be better for their children to do so. The reasons given were that the children would learn more, gain more enjoyment, get used to the routine of going every day, use up more energy or become more independent.

Of course some mothers saw advantages to themselves to be gained from their child attending the nursery unit (1%) or the playgroup (9%) on more days per week. The reasons given were that they would like more free time, more time to work or more time to study. They did not generally mind which days the child went to the playgroup. To some extent this was because they took the days they went as a given and arranged other things around them.

> "It's not a case of preferring those to other days, 'cause I have to arrange my week according to playgroup."

It was stated that 43% of the children going to playgroups could regularly go for fewer days and another 13% could go for fewer days some weeks but not every week. Mothers of 11% of the children currently attending a nursery school or class said that they could regularly take them for fewer days. In fact, this is unlikely to be the case. Mothers of another 27% said that they could take them for fewer days in some weeks. Thus, for mothers who want their children to go somewhere for just one or two days a week, a playgroup seems to be the answer. However, only a few mothers said that it would be better for them if their child attended the nursery unit (4%) or the playgroup (3%) for fewer days. This was either because they missed the child's company or because the outings they could have together were limited. Mothers of 6% of children at a nursery unit said that it would be better for the children themselves if they went for fewer days. The reasons given were that it would be better for them to go on outings with their mothers, that it was a long period of time for the younger children, that they should be broken in more gradually, and that it becomes boring for the children to go for so many days.

Holidays

Local authority nursery schools and classes and community playgroups take school holidays. Private nursery classes and private playgroups generally take private school holidays. Local authority day nurseries are closed on public holidays and usually for two weeks in the year. Mothers of 6% of the children currently attending nursery units, 5% of the children at playgroups and 7% of the children at day nurseries were not happy about the holidays. The reasons given were

that it was inconvenient because they were working and because they found it difficult to amuse their children during the holidays.

Mothers of 5% of the children attending playgroups thought that it would be better for the children not to have these holidays. The reasons given were that the children get bored at home, that they miss the company of children of their own age and, according to one mother, the break in routine is undesirable. She explains as follows.

> "Stuart settles very easily into a routine and once you break that routine — When they (playgroup) had their Easter holidays, they had two weeks, and for that two weeks that he wasn't going to playschool, we had nothing but scenes and tantrums because he wasn't going. He likes the routine and, once he's settled, that's him. But once you start to change his routine he does not like it at all."

Number of hours per day facility attended

Most of the playgroups which were attended by children in our sample were only open in the mornings. Only 4% went in the afternoons. Mothers of only 1% said that their children could attend for a longer period of time than they did although mothers of 37% said that they could go for a shorter period. 6% of the children in our sample currently attended a nursery school or class for a full day and the rest for half a nursery school day. Mothers of 16% said that they could take them for a longer period than they were currently doing and 40% said that they could take them for a shorter period.

Day nurseries, according to the mothers, are more flexible about the hours that the child attends than either nursery units or playgroups. 75% of our sample currently attending day nurseries were there for more than six hours per day. The other 25% went for half a day. In fact, two thirds of this latter group were attending private day nurseries rather than being priority cases with places allocated at a local authority day nursery. 75% of the mothers of children at day nurseries said that their children could go for a longer period if they wanted them to and 92% said that their children could go for a shorter period if that was what they wanted. Only one mother thought that the hours were not suitable for her child and this was more to do with the location of the day nursery and the fact that she had to work for financial reasons, rather than being a characteristic of day nursery provision.

Their mothers said that 9% of the children attending nursery units and 4% of the children attending playgroups would have enjoyed staying for more hours than at present. Mothers of 11% and 7%, respectively, would have preferred longer hours for their own benefit. The reasons given were that it would fit in with their job better, that they could get a job, that it would help their travelling arrangements,

that it would make it easier to fit in with collecting their children from school, and that they could get more housework done.

There are advantages in taking children in the mornings and advantages in taking them in the afternoon. An example of each follows.

> "The afternoon's better — I can take my time over everything, they can have their dinner and everything before they go. In the morning — I hate even going anywhere in the morning — it's too much of a carry-on running about, trying to get them ready."

> "Well, I find that in the morning, if they're at the nursery, you can get on with your work and get everything, sort of, done — you've more time for them in the afternoon, when they come home."

56% of the children in our sample currently attended a nursery school or class in the mornings and 38% attended in the afternoon. Mothers of 10% of this latter group would have preferred them to go in the mornings. The reasons given were that they would prefer to go out in the afternoons, that it would fit in with their work patterns better if the child was at nursery school in the mornings, that the children got bored in the mornings waiting to go, and that the children were too tired to go in the afternoons. An example follows.

> "I felt lately that maybe the morning would suit us because he's bored and hanging about and waiting to go — 'Am I going to nursery?', 'When am I going to nursery?' — just for the sheer — (benefit) of something to do."

Nobody said that they would prefer to take them in the afternoons rather than the mornings.

Mothers of only 2% of the children currently attending playgroups said that the other half of the day from the one that the child went on now would have been preferable for the child and 4% said it would have been better for themselves. Probably many, like the mother in the following quotation, did not see it as a possibility in the way that they may have done if it had been open a full-day five days a week.

> "If there'd been any choice I would probably have preferred the morning, but there was never any choice. You never thought about it. It was just on in the afternoons and that was that."

In other words, because playgroups are open for limited hours often only on certain days in the week, mothers do not have very much choice about when to take their children. Similarly, because nursery schools and classes like to be utilised fully, mothers have to

take their children, every or most days, in order to keep the place, and cannot always get a place for their child in the morning. This leads to inflexibility as described by a mother living in our outskirts area, in the following quotation.

> "You see, in this area there are so many Corporation Nursery Schools — I think there are too many! . . . But it means that a child really, as soon as they're three, in this area, are offered a place — and I think it's a bit too soon for most children. And also it means that there are no private Playgroups because, you know, they obviously can't compete with a free Corporation Nursery School. So it means, this is one of the reasons I have to take him over to (private playgroup) for two mornings a week. Because there's nothing that I know of in this area for two or three mornings a week, because of the large number of Nursery Schools."

On the other hand, day nurseries which are open much longer hours and accept that some mothers may require full-day care in the sense of seven or even eight hours are, nevertheless, accustomed to children being collected at different times through the day and even the same mother coming at different times, on different days, to suit her timetable.

Mothers' time

The number of mothers of pre-school children in our sample who had some kind of paid employment varied by area of residence.

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE OF MOTHERS IN PAID EMPLOYMENT, BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

Number of hours mother employed	*City centre*	*Outskirts*	*Rural*	*Total*
	%	%	%	%
Over 30 hours	6	5	1	4
Up to 30 hours	22	27	28	26
Not at all	72	68	71	70
Total number of mothers	193	193	195	581

Those who lived in the outskirts area of Edinburgh were more likely to be working than mothers living in the villages[3] (Table 4). Mothers living in both Edinburgh areas were more likely to be working full-

[3] Chi Sq = 6.83. P is less than 5%.

time than mothers living in the villages.[4] Wives of manual workers were more likely to be working than wives of non-manual workers.[5]

The availability of part-time domestic occupations, particularly in the rural and outskirts areas, is evident from the description in Table 5 of the type of occupations in which our sample was employed. This is the kind of work which is possible to do part-time[6] and, in some cases, young children can go with the mother.

> "It might seem funny to say you're going along to do someone's housework. But it takes you out and sort of, you know, you have that time away from your own house."

> "I'd like to work but not enough to leave the kids in charge of somebody else. It's very difficult to get a little job for two hours in the afternoon. That's what I'd like, ideally, but it's just not possible."

TABLE 5

TYPE OF CURRENT EMPLOYMENT OF MOTHERS, BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

Type of employment	*City centre*	*Outskirts*	*Rural*	*Total*
	%	%	%	%
Domestic	9	29	30	23
Sales	13	8	14	11
Factory	4	5	2	3
Clerical	13	18	11	14
Nursing	—	8	11	6
Professional	29	3	7	13
Others	33	29	26	29
Total number of mothers	55	62	57	174

[4] Chi Sq = 8.14. P is less than 5%.

[5] Ch Sq = 8.97. P is less than 1%.
1971 Census (10% sample) 20.2% of all women in Britain with children aged 0-4 years were economically active. (This includes those unemployed but waiting to start a new job.) The proportion of women with children under five working full-time was 5-6% in 1971 (Census). In Dundee in 1970 the employment rate for married women with a child aged 0-4 was 21% part-time and 7% full-time. (Hunt, Fox and Morgan, *Families and their Needs*, London, H.M.S.O.)

[6] Audrey Hunt (1975) *Management Attitudes and Practices Towards Women at Work*, London, H.M.S.O. Of the firms surveyed less than 10% employed part-time managers, supervisors or foremen, salesmen or skilled manual workers. However, 43% employed part-time office staff, 57% employed part-time cleaning and domestic staff, 19% employed part-time unskilled and 14% employed part-time semi-skilled manual workers.

It is not because of a lack of qualification or training for other employment but rather a lack of opportunity in suitable occupations.

> "I would but there's not that many offices and that many jobs in and round about here. You need to go to Edinburgh. But I'll try and get a part-time job. I was thinking of maybe home help, ken. But no, I don't think I'll get an office job again because before I had him, when I first got married, I had to take a job in a supermarket just for some extra money — well, helping."

A characteristic movement down the Registrar General's grades of occupations can be seen when we compare working mothers' first occupations with their present occupations. Out of 174, 41% moved downwards, 47% stayed the same and only 8% moved upwards. Table 6 shows the types of work they are moving between. Mothers who formerly had various occupations move into the category of domestic work.

TABLE 6

EMPLOYMENT OF MOTHERS WHEN THEY FIRST LEFT SCHOOL, BY CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

Type of occupation mothers first entered	*Current employment*							
	Domestic	*Sales*	*Factory*	*Clerical*	*Nursing*	*Professional*	*Others*	*Total*
Domestic	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	3
Sales	4	3	2	—	1	—	4	14
Factory	8	1	2	—	—	—	7	18
Clerical	16	6	1	22	1	—	13	59
Nursing	2	—	—	—	7	—	1	10
Professional	—	3	—	1	—	22	4	30
Others	8	7	1	1	2	—	21	40
Total	40	20	6	24	11	22	51	174

In addition to these mothers who had some paid employment, another 18% would like to have some paid employment. 3% would like to work full-time and the rest part-time. When asked their reason for not currently having any paid employment, 5% specifically mentioned that there were no facilities suitable for their children.

"If she could be at nursery from half past eight to four, or something like that, it would be a lot more convenient, and I don't think it would make much difference to her."

"The nurseries aren't actually designed so that mothers can go out to work. They're not really designed with that in mind at all. I think that's a pity because so many mothers are (going out to work) and there's so many people compromising — either compromising their kids or, I don't know, just having very complicated arrangements to fit a job in with pre-school kids. It's not easy."

"I'm astonished that there aren't more facilities around for, particularly, working mothers. I don't know how people manage. I mean, it seems to be the sort of middle income bracket that's badly hit by this because if your case is very needy you can get into a state nursery, and if you're very well-off you can afford to take nannies and things. If you're right in the middle, like us, working hard, you've got to pay all the time for the facilities that you're going to use. So we seem to lose out quite a lot in that respect. It's like the legal service, the people in the middle are caught in both directions."

36% mentioned that young children need their mothers to be at home with them.

"My mother never worked till all us left the school and I think you should stay at home with the weans if you can afford to do it."

"I really feel that the first five years of a child's life is the most formative period. If, in the first five years they've been well looked after, they've got strength to cope with a huge comprehensive (school) or whatever. If they've been messed around in the first five years they find it hard to cope with other things."

Thus, many had plans to go out to work when they were freed to some extent by their children going to nursery school (9%), primary school (24%) or when their children were older (9%).

"I would like to go to work but I think I've reconciled myself to waiting till next year when Joanne starts school."

"Well, when they're both sort of really established at school, I would try, probably, and get a part-time job. I'm not that interested in anything. I find it boring just to be at home or just to go round. I mean, it's quite fun now to go visiting people with children and if it's a nice afternoon the kids play and we have a natter and a cup of coffee but there's no reason for it. I find it all a bit meaningless."

18% had no particular plans about going back to work and 21% said that they did not want to go back to work at all.[7]

The majority of working mothers in all three areas worked fewer than thirty hours per week (Table 4).

They managed to fit employment in with rearing pre-school children by working evenings, a mixture of different hours or mornings. This was not always entirely satisfactory.

> "I wasn't incredibly impressed by part-time work actually. It wasn't as enjoyable working part-time as I'd thought it would be ... It's quite nice from a family point of view. I mean, I'd hate to work full-time. It's part-time or nothing... It's quite nice in terms of the company, which was what I was hoping for, a good working relationship, which is quite different to the 'coffee time' sort of chit-chat ... It's nice to work alongside people and have that sort of relationship, work at things together ... No, it wasn't so good. I was always on the periphery of things. And having rigid hours, which the Nursery enforces on you, you can't stay after and chat and you can't come early, and you miss the lunch hour, which is a social chit-chat thing ... So really, it didn't provide me with what I hoped it would."

Whether they worked or not was not clearly related to whether their child had a pre-school place (Table 7). Some mothers did work, for

TABLE 7

TIME OF DAY THAT MOTHER* WORKS BY TYPE OF FACILITY CHILD ATTENDS

	Nursery unit	*Playgroup*	*Day nursery/ daycarer*	*Child-minder*	*None*	*Total %*
Morning	15	12	2	1	10	23
Afternoon	4	2	1	—	2	5
9 am to 3 pm	—	—	—	—	—	2
9 am to 5 pm	5	3	1	3	5	10
Evening	19	10	—	—	12	24
Mixture of hours	17	11	3	—	15	27
Nights	4	3	—	—	3	6
Others	2	1	—	—	2	3
Number of mothers	70	42	7	4	42	172

* 2 single fathers work full-time and take children to a day nursery

[7] In Hunt's survey of women's employment, op. cit. (1975), about half the mothers of children under five years old reported that they would probably go back to work at some time.

example, in the mornings whilst their child was at playgroup, nursery school and so on. In some cases, the hours were compatible, in some cases the children had to be delivered and collected by someone else, and in some cases the fact that the mother worked made it impossible for the child to attend. For example, an Italian lady who worked 9 to 5.30 in her husband's shop, was not able to take her two pre-school children to nursery school and did not feel that she could expect her mother, who cared for the children in her absence, to do so.

In all the four cases of a child currently being taken to a childminder, the reason was that the mother worked or studied. However, only 7 of the 18 people with daycare or day nursery places were working. Two others were looking for employment.

Mothers who are currently working are more likely to give financial reasons for so doing than mothers thinking about working in the future[8] (Table 8).

TABLE 8

REASONS MOTHERS GAVE FOR WORKING, BY WHETHER THEY ARE WORKING NOW OR WOULD LIKE TO WORK NOW OR IN THE FUTURE

Reasons	*Mothers who are currently working*	*Mothers who would like to work now or in the future*
	%	%
Like their work	19	10
Career orientation	6	5
To meet people	5	7
Money necessary	28	22
Money for extras	26	9
Not liking to be idle	12	28
Others	1	1
No response	3	29
Total	174	281

In the first quotation below, a single mother explains why she has to work and in the second, a mother of four who works 8 hour shifts as a packer in a biscuit factory, gives her reasons.

> "I like work but — I couldn'ae possibly gie' up work. No' for what money I would get. I couldn'ae afford to live on it no' nowadays. I do like it but I would like to work part-time."

[8] Chi Sq = 29.37. P is less than 0.1%.

"I don't think I could give that up now, you know. I hadn't worked for years since I had the first one. I've only been working about a year now. I thought about going back to work. With four of them (children) you never got any, sort of luxuries. You save and save and save if you wanted that particular thing, you know, and I just jokingly said to him (husband) that I wanted to work and before I knew where I was, I'd started."

However, financial reasons for working are closely followed in frequency by statements that the mothers like their work. The first example below is taken from in interview with a part-time lecturer and the second, from an interview with an auxiliary nurse.

"Because I enjoy it, basically, there isn't any other reason. I find my work enjoyable. It keeps my brain ticking over. I've been used to working. We were married five years before Gillian arrived. My job is one that adapts easily to part-time work and if I can't manage it then there's always someone to cover. All these things make it very easy. I can do a lot of it at home. And I feel it's a bit of a waste to have studied at university for 6 years and then to have studied further for another 3 or 4 years, just to give it all up."

"I see people at my work but somebody that doesn't work (wouldn't see enough people during the day). It's alright for a while, and it could be alright for a couple of years, but you definitely need other people to talk to. Not just other mummies. I mean, other than nappies and bottles and things like that. There's other things to discuss with people than this."

Some mothers who worked for financial reasons would rather not have done so.

"It's definitely a disadvantage. You miss them growing up."
"I'm not wanting to work. I want some more time with him before he starts school. That's 2½ years that I've missed with sort of rushing for buses and being away for 4 hours and then picking him up . . . I've missed quite a bit of the interesting years so I want to make up for (them) a bit now. But my need for him, I think, is greater than his need for me now."

Most fathers, according to their wives, helped to look after the pre-school children in the family. However, 11% in the city area, 10% in the outskirts area and 23% of fathers in the rural area did not help to look after them. Only 18% of our sample mentioned other forms of help. Table 9 lists different helpers and whether or not this was voluntary or professional.

TABLE 9

ASSISTANCE WITH PRE-SCHOOL CHILD CARE

	Paid	*Voluntary*	*Total*
			%
Grandmother	2	45	45
Other relative	—	8	7
Friend, neighbour	6	25	30
Nanny, domestic, au pair	17	—	16
Other	—	1	1
Number of helpers	25	79	104

Whereas 68% of the helpers in our outskirts area were grandmothers, in the city centre area and the villages, they represented 29% and 45% respectively. On the other hand, whereas 19% of the helpers in the city centre area were classified as nannies, domestics or au pairs, 3% and 6%, respectively of such people were employed in the outskirts area and the villages.

Transport problems

The distance between pre-school facilities and home can have an important influence on the way the mother spends her day.

> "If I thought there was a day nursery nearer my work, I'd take her there because, to me, it would be a lot easier, instead of having to go that way first and then that way to my work. Of course, you've got all this time waiting on buses at night, as well, sometimes until about half past five, quarter to six. Some days it's even later than that if you're no' lucky."

> "Then it wasn't so good because I took one to school and then come home, hung around for a quarter of an hour or so, and then went off in a different direction, which is a bit of a waste (of time)."

Figures 1, 2 and 3 in Chapter 1, and Table 10, illustrate the fact that children travel further to day nurseries and childminders than to nursery units and community playgroups.[9] They are more likely to have to travel to day nurseries by bus[10] (Table 11).

[9] Chi Sq = 10.4. P is less than 1%.
[10] Chi Sq = 77.62. P is less than 0.1%.

TABLE 10

DISTANCE BETWEEN HOME AND PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES CURRENTLY ATTENDED

	Nursery unit	*Playgroup*	*Day nursery/ daycarer*	*Childminder*
	%	%	%	%
Up to 1 mile	77	81	42	75
Over 1-2 miles	9	10	25	25
Over 2-3 miles	5	3	25	—
Over 3 miles	7	6	—	—
Not stated	2	—	8	—
Number of children	197	134	18	4

TABLE 11

MEANS OF TRANSPORT TO PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES CURRENTLY ATTENDED, BY TYPE OF FACILITY

	Nursery unit	*Playgroup*	*Day nursery daycarer*	*Childminder*
	%	%	%	%
On foot	65	73	33	75
By bus	2	3	50	—
Lift in a car	13	7	—	—
Own car	18	17	11	25
Not stated	1	—	6	—
Number of children	197	134	18	4

Mothers were asked whether this arrangement was satisfactory. Their answers varied according to the means of transport used. Some said that it was too far away because it necessitated taking the car.

> "The only reason that I can contemplate going to nursery school in . . . is because we have the use of the car, and most of us do. You know, we drive and we borrow our husbands' cars and the lucky few have their own cars. It would be much nicer to have a school that we could walk to."

Others said it was too far because it was a long way to walk. In some cases this applied to distances of less than a mile. Others meant that it

was quite a long distance to go twice a day, even driving one's own car if it was, for example, between three and five miles. This applied, largely, to children in rural areas.

> "The facilities for under five's are perfectly adequate but the transport isn't."

> "There's a bus comes round and picks them up in the morning but I'm responsible for collecting him at lunch time, which is one of the reasons, in fact, why he's going to be going all day. Because I couldn't afford bus fares to go and get him. And also, we're having a new baby, so it'll be awkward to go and get him anyway.

Of course bus fares and petrol were an additional cost which was mentioned by a few mothers.

> "At one time I was not getting a lift along and I was paying £3 on bus fares a week to take them. I felt it was worth it, but we're lucky now (because) we get a lift."

Financial considerations

Whereas, in most cases (95%), the cost of taking a child to a local authority nursery school or class was less than five pence a day, this was the case for only 21% of the children currently attending playgroups.[11] It cost 47% of mothers of playgroup children five to ten pence, 17% ten to twenty pence and 14% more than twenty pence a day.

Mothers of 16% of children currently attending playgroups said that the cost was something that they had thought about when they were deciding where to take them. Some felt the cost was rather high, especially when they made the comparison with Education Authority provision.

> "I felt a bit put out because David had gone to nursery school and there you put five pence in the bank for pet foods and what have you, for their nursery, but they had, I felt, more facilities for nothing, and you have to pay down there (at the playgroup) for less facilities."

4% said that they had considered carefully whether it was worth paying for their children to go to a private playgroup and had decided that it was.

There is no charge for Local Authority day nursery places or for places with daycarers in Lothian region. The three children attending private day nurseries were all costing their parents over £1 per day. Mothers of 67% of children currently attending Local Authority day

[11] Chi Sq = 184.11. P is less than 0.1%.

nurseries said that they would be prepared to pay for the place. However, 22% said that they could not afford to pay.

The mothers with children currently being cared for by childminders in three out of four cases, felt that they could afford to pay. One, a part-time teacher, paid £15 a week for part-day care; another, a student, paid £10 a week for full-day care; the third would not say how much she paid; the fourth mother, as a single parent, received full-day care free under the region's daycare scheme; now, because she has married, she has to pay £9 for four days of exactly the same arrangement.

> "A lot of people think it's no' a lot but it's a lot out of my wages when you think about it, just for four days."

In general, the cost was not an important consideration in the choice of whether or not to take one's child to a nursery school or class. Mothers of 9% of children currently attending such places said that they had thought about the cost when deciding where to take them. Of these, some (3%) would have preferred to send them somewhere more expensive if they could have afforded it and some of these mothers (2%) had decided to pay for private provision. 78% of the mothers not already paying, except for refreshments and so on, said that they would be willing to pay over £1 per week and another 27% said that they would pay over 50 pence per week.

> "Well, there was all this talk about paying £2 a week round about Christmas. We thought we would like to pay something. We would be quite willing to pay but most of us around here felt that £1 a week would be what we could afford quite happily."

10% said that they would not pay, either because they could not afford to (3%) or because they objected in principle (4%).

Physical surroundings and equipment

Mothers of 59% of the children currently attending nursery schools and classes did not think that the facilities and equipment could be improved upon. Mothers of 18% thought that certain improvements could be made and 9% were not sure. 17% thought that the nursery school or class needed better equipment; 14% thought that it lacked a particular kind of equipment; 33% thought that more space was required; 25% that a more suitable playground could be provided; and 6% thought that there should be more staff.

> "I really feel that money is very scarce now and I think they're doing the best they can under the circumstances . . . They have a sand-pit, which is just a table top, I think, and they have pails and buckets to play with. And they have a pet

> corner. And they have a corner where they paint, and, as I say, they have about twenty-five children. They've only got two easel boards so they can't all paint when they want to paint. About six children, roughly, can play in the sand-pit together. They have a water corner. When they want to bake, well only one can do it at a time. They have a story corner. They all generally get to sit down at that time. A music corner and I should imagine they can't all play instruments at the one time. But I think that'll be the same in all nursery schools."

> "I think there should be a gym of some kind, some kind of area in which they can do some sort of general gym activities ... Just even bits of bars and some climbing things, you know. Because the playground is a large open space and there's a chute and a slide and things. I think it's quite good at that age to channel their energy in that direction."

Mothers of 54% of children currently attending playgroups were quite satisfied with the standard of facilities. 27% could suggest improvements and the rest were either not sure or did not answer the question. Of these, 37% thought that the equipment could be improved; 9% thought that the acquisition of a particular type of equipment would be helpful; 19% thought that it would be better if the playgroup had a permanent place so that equipment did not have to be cleared away every day and also so that material and children's work could be displayed on the walls. Mothers of 2% said that they thought the playgroup needed more space and 2% thought that a place outside for the children to play was necessary.

Mothers of 67% of children currently attending day nurseries could not think of any way in which the facilities could be improved. This included the mothers of all three children attending private day nurseries. The other 17% represented two mothers, one of whom would like to see more imaginative things for the children to do and the other would like to see more staff, particularly more older members of staff because she felt that some of the existing staff were too young and not responsible enough.

Daycarers and childminders look after children in their own homes and so the question about whether the facilities were adequate was not as relevant. However, two mothers mentioned the availability of toys. One mother commented that it would be better if there was a grassy area on which the children could play.

In sum, although some mothers thought that there was room for improvement of the facilities in nursery units, day nurseries or playgroups, this opinion was more marked amongst mothers with children in the latter category. A problem peculiar to playgroups, on

which the mothers of 19% of children attending commented, was the necessity to set out all the equipment at the beginning of each session and clear it away at the end. This limits the amount of equipment which can be available to the children at any one session, and in most cases, minimises the amount of material which can be displayed on the walls, and puts a considerable amount of work on to the shoulders of the adults running the facility. In some cases, it is necessary for the children to play games and sing songs or engage in other activities not requiring any equipment for the last part of the session, so that the room can be cleared ready for the next occupants which may be, for example, an old peoples' lunch club.

It is obviously not possible for these physical and temporal aspects of pre-school facilities to suit every mother. For example, the hours are unlikely to be the most convenient for all mothers working when they themselves work such a variety of hours. However, it does seem as though many such mothers take the facility opening hours as a given and fit in other aspects of their lives around them. It is when they see other mothers getting different hours, for example, mornings instead of afternoons, at a nursery unit, that they are most likely to state that they would like a different time of day. Similarly, in city areas where there is a variety of provision, mothers can, within limits, choose the type of facility which best meets their requirements. On the other hand, they may sacrifice some convenience to themselves because of the less tangible advantages the place offers the child. We shall consider this in Chapter 4.

3

WHAT DO PARENTS KNOW ABOUT PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES?

It is often stated that parents are ignorant of or confused about what is offered by different pre-school facilities.[1] Following on from this there is also a fairly common belief that if more people did know about such facilities more people would wish to use them. An example of such a statement follows.

> "With nursery places generally in short supply it is hardly surprising that there have not been attempts to publicise provision as a way of attracting needy families, since this would have increased demand from all social groups which could not then be satisfied."[2]

We examined both these assumptions. First, mothers were asked questions about what they knew about existing facilities.[3] Second, a small scale intervention study was carried out to examine the influence of changing the level of knowledge on the pattern of demand.[4]

Although most mothers of children aged a few weeks up to five and half years (71%) were aware of the fact that different types of facilities existed in areas other than the ones in which they lived, the amount of facilities nearby influenced the number of main types of facilities that they could bring to mind. Mothers living in the centre of the city where there is a large variety of facilities, named more types of facilities than mothers living on the outskirts of the city[5] and they, in turn, named more than mothers living in the rural areas studied[6] (Table 12). In addition, mothers with husbands in non-manual

1 Bradley, M. and Kucharski, R., 1977, 'They Never Asked Us Before' . . . *A Survey of Pre-School Needs in Liverpool*, Liverpool Institute of Higher Education; and Halsey, A. H. and Smith, T., 1978, *Pre-School Expansion: Its Impact on Parental Involvement and on the Structure of Provision*, SSRC Grant 2915/2 (Final Report).

2 Feldmeier, R. R. and Stockdale, R. W., *Pre-School Education and Care*, DES, London, 1975.

3 Study described in Appendix I.

4 Study described in Appendix II.

5 Chi Sq = 7.2. P is less than 5%.

6 Chi Sq = 21.7. P is less than .01%.

occupations were more likely to mention four or more types of facilities than women with husbands in manual occupations.[7]

TABLE 12

NUMBER OF TYPES OF FACILITIES MENTIONED, BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

Number of types of facilities	*Area of residence*			
	City centre	*Outskirts*	*Rural*	*Total*
	%	%	%	%
1, 2	8	5	17	10
3, 4	41	54	58	51
5-7	50	41	25	39
Total number	193	193	197	583[8]

Mothers were more likely to name the types of facilities which existed locally. Nursery school and class places were available both in the centre and on the outskirts of the city but in only one of the villages studied. Although a high proportion of mothers overall named nursery schools and classes, more city residents than rural residents mentioned them[9] (Table 13). Mothers with husbands in

TABLE 13

PERCENTAGE MENTIONING DIFFERENT TYPES OF FACILITIES, BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

Type of facility mentioned	*Area of residence*			
	City centre	*Outskirts*	*Rural*	*Total*
	%	%	%	%
Nursery school, class	93	97	80	90
Private nursery school	3	5	5	4
Day nursery, local authority	68	74	40	37
Day nursery, private	15	13	9	12
Day nursery, unspecified	6	4	8	6
Playgroup in premises	88	73	90	84
Playgroup in homes	8	4	2	5
Playgroups, unspecified	3	4	4	4
Childminder	80	76	78	78
Daycarer	6	15	—	10
Mother and toddler group	59	52	45	52
Creche	10	10	7	9
Total number	193	193	197	583

[7] Chi Sq = 32.0. P is less than 1%.
[8] 3 mothers did not name any facilities.
[9] Chi Sq = 32.9. P is less than .01%.

non-manual occupations were more likely to be amongst the few mentioning private nursery units than those with husbands in manual occupations.[10]

Similarly, fewer mothers living in the rural areas than those living in the city named local authority or private day nurseries.[11] Whereas a fairly high proportion of mothers mentioned local authority day nurseries, only a few mentioned private day nurseries. Those who did were more likely to be wives of non-manual than manual workers.[12] Daycarers were even less likely to be mentioned but again, mothers in the rural areas were the least likely to mention them.[13]

The only type of facility that was more common in the villages than in the area on the outskirts of the city was the playgroup. Thus, we find that mothers living in the city centre[14] or the villages[15] were more likely to name playgroups than those living on the outskirts of the city. Once again a social class difference could be observed in that more wives of non-manual workers mentioned playgroups in homes than wives of manual workers[16]. Even mother and toddler groups were more likely to be mentioned by mothers living in the centre of the city than mothers living in villages.[17]

Mothers were not only more likely to mention facilities which existed locally but they were also more likely to be well-informed about them. Mothers in the outskirts[18] and centre[19] of the city areas were more likely to be very knowledgeable[20] about nursery schools and classes than mothers living in the rural areas. However, the level of knowledge overall was high. 75% of the mothers were rated as 'very knowledgeable'.

There is a similar relationship between area of residence and level of knowledge about day nurseries[21] and childminders or daycarers.[22] Generally, mothers were less knowledgeable about day nurseries and childminders than about nursery schools and classes and playgroups — 45% and 33% respectively being rated as very knowledgeable

10 Chi Sq = 8.0. P is less than 1%.
11 Chi Sq = 4.0. P is less than 5%.
12 Chi Sq = 29.0. P is less than 2%.
13 Chi Sq = 9.1. P is less than 1%.
14 Chi Sq = 33.6. P is less than .01%.
15 Chi Sq = 22.7. P is less than .01%.
16 Chi Sq = 8.9. P is less than 1%.
17 Chi Sq = 6.9. P is less than 1%.
18 Chi Sq = 24.3. P is less than .01%.
19 Chi Sq = 12.3. P is less than 1%.
20 Mothers were rated as very knowledgeable if they could state 4 or more facts, fairly knowledgeable if they mentioned 3 and as possessing only a little information if they knew 1 or 2 of the simple facts, listed in Table 3.
21 Outskirts/Rural Chi Sq = 19.9. P is less than .01%.
City/Rural Chi Sq = 8.6. P is less than 5%.
22 Outskirts/Rural Chi Sq = 28.8. P is less than .01%.
City/Rural Chi Sq = 16.7. P is less than .01%.

compared with 72%, when they were discussing playgroups. Knowledge about playgroups, however, was more widespread in the rural and city centre areas than in the area on the outskirts of the city[23]. As we have seen they are more common in these areas.

The mothers of the pre-school children interviewed were generally familiar with the hours that different pre-school facilities are likely to be open and the ages of the children who are eligible to attend (Table 14). Whereas most of the mothers mentioning nursery units and playgroups knew something about the activities in which the children engage whilst they are there, the mothers who mentioned day nurseries and childminders were less likely to know what happens to the child during the day.

The information that mothers were least likely to have was the amount of money it would cost them to take a child to a particular

TABLE 14

PERCENTAGE OF MOTHERS KNOWING DIFFERENT FACTS ABOUT PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES[24]

Type of information	*Type of facility*					
	Nursery unit	*Day nursery*	*Play-group*	*Child-minder daycarer*	*Mother & toddler group*	*Creche*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Hours	90	93	82	81	78	86
Cost	65	33	65	28	45	36
Activities	80	37	75	15	75	56
Who runs them	85	72	76	19	75	80
Staff training	73	45	42	17	39	34
Parental involvement	98	49	78	10	90	60
Ages of children admitted	85	67	81	55	87	64
Payment or non-payment				23		
About registrations				36		
Total number	531	420	521	465	303	50

[23] Outskirts/City Chi Sq = 9.4. P is less than 1%.
Outskirts/Rural Chi Sq = 35.9. P is less than .01%.
City/Rural Chi Sq = 11.9. P is less than .01%.

[24] If their answer was obviously wrong they were not included in a particular category.

facility[25] and whether or not the staff involved in running the facility were required to have any specialised training. In some instances, namely playgroups and mother-and-toddler groups, the question of training was related to the question of who runs the facilities, for example, if it had been stated that they were 'just Mums' or something similar. Only 36% of the mothers who named childminders or daycarers seemed to be aware of the fact that such people are required to register with the Social Work Department.

The most common source of information about facilities, apart from the fact that the mother is currently taking a child to this facility, is friends and neighbours (Table 15). A recent television series about childminding was frequently said to be the source of information about childminders. The mass media was also a more common source of information about creches than about other kinds of

TABLE 15

PERCENTAGE OF MOTHERS CITING DIFFERENT SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES

Source of information	*Type of facility*					
	Nursery unit	*Day nursery*	*Play-group*	*Child-minder/ daycarer*	*Mother & toddler group*	*Creche*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Currently taking child	47	8	44	5	92	24
Newspaper, television	1	1	1	19	1	18
Seeing the place	2	8	2	—	1	—
Friends and neighbours	31	30	29	22	32	24
Relatives	4	3	2	1	2	—
From the facility	3	5	3	2	30	8
Professionals	1	3	1	4	3	—
Total number	531	420	521	465	303	50

facilities. There were no creches in the localities in which we carried out our interviews and very few in Edinburgh or Lothian region in general.

[25] In the case of childminders and daycarers the cost item has to be looked at in conjunction with the additional item that you pay or do not pay. Some respondents knew that daycarers were paid by the Social Work Department and childminders by private arrangement with the mother, but were not aware of the amount of money that they were paid.

In other words, mothers of pre-school children were fairly knowledgeable about the pre-school facilities existing in their locality, particularly nursery units or playgroups. The facilities attended by few children were less likely to be mentioned and less was likely to be known about them. The question arises as to whether more mothers would use such facilities or any facilities if they had more information about them.

Two things were studied: first, in a given area[26] the extent to which giving people information about pre-school provision influenced the pattern of demand in terms of action — that is, the extent to which more people could be made to want to use facilities just because they knew that they existed, and the extent to which a particular type of facility became more popular amongst a particular section of the population, such as mothers with children of a certain age. Secondly, the effectiveness of different ways of transmitting this information was compared.

The different ways of transmitting information about pre-school facilities that were tried were information leaflets; discussion sessions and a video-recording made in the area. A description of the effectiveness of each follows.

Not everybody reads leaflets that are put through the door, particularly if they do not seem to be of immediate relevance to them. Hence, people already using some kind of pre-school facility tended not to be interested in our information leaflets. Twelve of them (11%) had children, who had, in fact, already gone to school. Six mothers (6%) did not see the leaflets at all. Another twelve (11%) saw the leaflets but did not read them. Of these, one was leaving the country in a few weeks' time, nine were already using some kind of provision, one had only a baby of three weeks and another, a child two years old. Four of the mothers (4%) did not speak English, presumably they did not read the leaflets and, anyway, could not answer the questions.

Nineteen mothers (18%) said they did not gain any information at all from the leaflets. Sixteen of them were already using some kind of provision and the other three had definite plans to take their child somewhere after the summer holidays.

Table 16 shows the number of mothers who said they had gained information about one or more types of facility. They total forty-one (38%). In addition, thirteen (12%) mothers said that they had gained information from the list of facilities in the Leith area, such as their numbers and locations. Eleven (10%) mothers had gained information from both the general descriptions and the list of specific places.

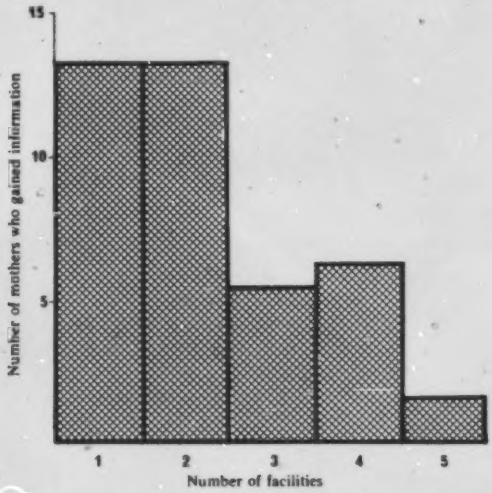
[26] The design and area of this study is described in Appendix III.

Table 17 shows that it was the case that more mothers gained information about childminders, day nurseries and mother-and-toddler groups than about playgroups and nursery units.

Thirty-five of the mothers who had gained information from reading the leaflet, (33% of the total number of mothers contacted) said that they had not changed their plans for their pre-school child as a result of reading the information leaflet. Twenty-two of them were already using some kind of facility; another five had made

TABLE 16

NUMBER OF MOTHERS WHO SAID THAT THEY HAD GAINED INFORMATION ABOUT THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ONE OR MORE TYPES OF FACILITIES FROM THE INFORMATION LEAFLETS



arrangements to do so; one had her name down and the remaining seven had previously planned which facilities to use.

Six of the mothers who said that they had gained information also said that reading the leaflet had influenced their plans for their pre-school child. (6% of the total number of mothers contacted.) The changes were as follows. Two had decided that they might take their children to a childminder. (They had not known about childminders

TABLE 17

NUMBER OF MOTHERS WHO SAID THAT THEY HAD GAINED INFORMATION ABOUT EACH TYPE OF FACILITY

Type of facility	*Number of mothers*	*Percentage of mothers who gained information*
Playgroup	9	22%
Nursery unit	10	24%
Day nursery	23	56%
Childminder	30	73%
Mother-and-toddler group	23	56%

previously.) One mother thought that she might move her two and a half year old child from a playgroup to a nursery class. She now knew where such classes were. One mother said that she thought that she would change her plan to send her seventeen month old child to a playgroup when the child was old enough and send her to a nursery school instead. Another mother of a child nearly three years old said that she would send the child to a nursery class. She had not known that they existed. Finally, a mother said that she might take her nearly two year old child to a playgroup at two and a half rather than waiting until the child was three.

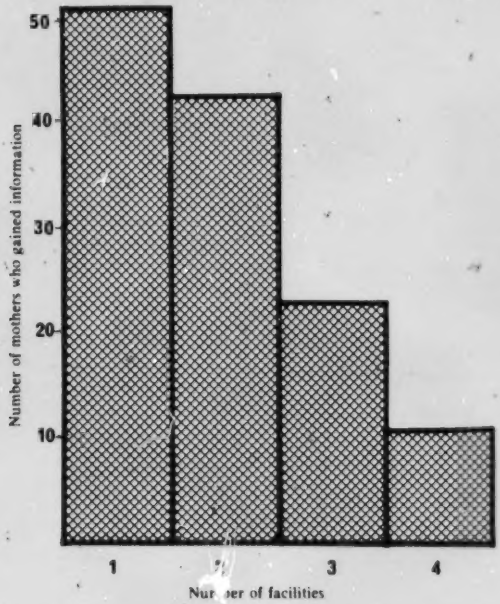
The coffee and discussion sessions showed unequivocally that people will not come to such a meeting when it is advertised by such an impersonal means as posters. There has to be some point of contact. Somebody has to personally invite the mothers to come or they have to know some other people that will be there. The one mother who did attend the meeting in the community room of the block of flats brought her mother and child with her. The only people to come to the meeting in the Community Centre were the two playleaders from the playgroup held there. However, seven of the mother-and-toddler group mothers who had had personal invitations stating that all the mothers in their group were being invited, came. The one mother who came to the first meeting completed a questionnaire for us which showed that she had gained information about playgroups, nursery units, day nurseries and childminders. She said that she had enjoyed the discussion and now was thinking of taking her child to a playgroup or nursery unit when she was old enough. For the moment, she would like to go to a mother-and-toddler group and enquired about where the nearest one met.

At the third coffee and discussion session, the experts outlined the characteristics of the pre-school provision in the area and, at the end, the mothers present completed questionnaires telling us the kind of

information that they felt they had gained. It proved to be minimal. Although they all stated that they had enjoyed the discussion, only one mother had gained information about playgroups and two about nursery units. Four of the mothers present were wanting to take an Open University course in Child Development and one of them was the treasurer of the mother-and-toddler group. This suggests that the

TABLE 18

NUMBER OF MOTHERS WHO SAID THAT THEY HAD GAINED INFORMATION ABOUT THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ONE OR MORE TYPE OF FACILITY FROM THE TELEVISION PROGRAMME



few mothers who did actually attend a discussion had perhaps a rather different interest in young children from the majority of people.

Altogether, 207 mothers completed questionnaires for us after watching the television recording. 124 (60%) of them gained some information from it. Table 18 illustrates the numbers who gained information about one or more type of facility.

Table 19 shows the number of parents who gained information about the different types of facilities by the type of facility they were

currently using. They were less likely to know about day nurseries and childminders than about playgroups and nursery units. More of them were currently taking their children to playgroups and nursery units. However, some parents gained information about the type of facility that their child was currently attending. The fact that mothers attending mother-and-toddler groups and baby clinics do not gain significantly more information than other groups is perhaps because they have older children as well.

TABLE 19

THE NUMBER OF PARENTS WHO SAID THAT THEY HAD GAINED INFORMATION ABOUT EACH TYPE OF FACILITY, BY THE TYPE OF FACILITY THEY ARE CURRENTLY USING

Questionnaire: where completed	*Playgroup*		*Nursery unit*		*Day nursery*		*Childminder*		*Number of questionnaires*
Playgroup	4	6%	18	26%	22	32%	18	26%	68
Nursery unit	28	37%	17	23%	32	43%	30	40%	75
Day nursery	15	52%	12	41%	7	24%	19	66%	29
M. & T. group	4	17%	3	13%	6	25%	7	29%	24
Other	4	36%	5	45%	3	27%	1	9%	11
Total	55		55		70		75		207

Most of the parents who were currently using some kind of pre-school facility for their child, after seeing the programme, still thought that they were using the most suitable provision. However, there were a few exceptions. One mother with a child at a playgroup said that she thought a place in a nursery unit might be better for the child. Another mother, who took her child to a playgroup for the mornings and a nursery class for the afternoons, said that it would be better if she took the child to a day nursery. Five mothers said that they were now unsure of the suitability of the facility they were currently using. Two of them were taking their children to playgroups and three of them were taking their children to day nurseries. One of the latter said that she thought a nursery unit might be better but the others did not say what they had in mind.

Forty-four mothers not currently using any of the pre-school facilities described in the programme said that they intended taking their child to one of these places as a result of seeing the programme. Twenty-seven of them said they would be taking their child to a playgroup, twenty-three to a nursery unit, two said that they would be trying to get a place at a day nursery and two would be looking for childminders.

The most important feature of information-giving is that it is a two-way process. People have got to read what you give them, listen to you talking or watch your television programme. Many will not do any of these things. Your chances are increased if you go to them — for example, by putting leaflets through their doors or giving leaflets out in the street, rather than expecting mothers to come to a meeting. The chances of people coming to a meeting seem to be increased if they have a special interest in coming or if the meeting is seen as a social occasion because they know other people who will be there. Perhaps it is the number of demands made on mothers with young children that accounts for the fact that only 30% of mothers with children at the nursery school where the video-recording was made came to see it when it was finished.

According to our data, 60% of mothers who came said that they had gained information from the television programme, compared with 50% of mothers who said they had gained information from the leaflets. This must be interpreted with caution. If we subtract the 34 parents who said that they had not read the leaflet from the total, the percentage who gained some information from the leaflets becomes 74%. However, some of the parents who watched the television programme had children who were about to go to primary school or were already fixed up. Thus, what it perhaps shows is that it requires a greater interest or commitment to read a leaflet about pre-school provision than it does to watch a television programme about it. However, once an attempt is made to read it just as much information, at least of a factual nature, can be gained.

Many other people have watched our television programme. Not only friends, grandparents and playleaders but also health visitors, teachers and social workers. Copies have been made available to nursing officers for use in training health visitors and to teachers using a resource centre. In this way, the level of knowledge about facilities and therefore, perhaps, mutual understanding has been, and will be increased.

A general campaign with the aim of advertising facilities in the areas as widely as possible included such things as an 'Open Week' in the facilities, a permanent display in a shop, a playgroup in an empty shop, a 'paint in' and posters. On the assumption that after the campaign, every mother of a pre-school child living in the area must know of the existence of childminders, day nurseries, playgroups, nursery schools and nursery classes, the pattern of demand before and after this intervention was compared.

The demand for childminding

Seven childminders were identified and contacted initially. Three gave up, 1 moved out of the area and another 1 started during the first

year. Two of the minders cared for the same child for the two years, one of them was a child of a friend, and were not interested in having any others. For only 2 minders was it possible to make comparison over the two year period. Between them they had 5 enquiries the first year and 5 enquiries the second year. In the first year, 2 of the enquirers knew the minder personally, 2 had been suggested by a social worker, a health visitor or day nursery matron and in the fifth case it was the parents who advertised and the minder responded. In the second year, 2 of the enquirers had been directed to the minder by a social worker or health visitor, 1 was already known by the minder and 1 had seen the minder's name on the leaflet produced for the intervention project 'Under 5 in Leith'.

The demand for day nursery places

Entry to a day nursery on application was not at all automatic. In the first year we monitored applications, 28% of the children considered eligible for places were put on the waiting list[27]. In the second year 36% of such cases were put on the waiting list rather than being given places straight away. If we subtract those children whose

TABLE 20

NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS TO DAY NURSERIES, BY THE AGE OF THE CHILDREN, IN THE TWO YEARS OF MONITORING

	Age at time of enquiry					
	under 2	*2-2.5*	*2.6-2.11*	*3-3.11*	*4+*	*Total*
Year 1						
Waiting list	25	6	2	1	2	36
Given a place	26	7	3	6	6	50
Referred	4	1	0	2	2	9
Refused	7	1	0	0	3	11
Withdrawn	4	1	0	0	1	6
	66	16	5	9	14	112
Year 2						
Waiting list	25	8	4	6	1	44
Given a place	31	9	6	7	4	57
Referred	3	4	2	1	2	12
Refused	4	0	0	2	1	7
Withdrawn	1	0	0	0	0	1
	64	21	12	16	8	121

[27] Children who had to wait for 6 weeks or more for a day nursery place were classified as being put on the waiting list whereas children who waited for 4 weeks or more for a playgroup or nursery unit place were classified as being put on the waiting list. This is because it takes much longer for day nursery applications to be considered than applications to other facilities.

applications were withdrawn there were 14 more applications in the year after the advertising campaign compared with the previous year (Table 20). Although 57 children were given places compared with 50 children in the first year, 44 went on to the waiting list compared with 36 in the first year.

Over the two year period the most common reason given for choosing to apply to a particular facility was that it was the nearest to the homes of the applicants. Another 10% of the children's parents said that it was the nearest to their work. 52% of the applications over the two years were for children of single parents who wanted to work, 18% were for children whose parents were having financial difficulties and other reasons for application concerned the mother's health, child's health or development, and inadequate housing.

In both years most of the mothers applying to a day nursery said that they had heard about it from a health visitor, social worker and so on (66% in the first year and 77% in the second year). Whereas in the year before our intervention only 6% cited friends and neighbours, 16% did so in the year following.[28] Again it seems as though we may have raised the level of information of people living in the area in general.

25% of the children who left the day nurseries over the two years did so because they were going to primary school. 26% moved house and 36% were no longer eligible for places.

The day nurseries in the area draw applications from the widest catchment area of any type of provision in the area studied. There are fewer such facilities in the city and mothers appear to be willing to travel further to them than they would to other facilities. In the first year 46%, and in the second year 43%, of the enquiries about places came from outside the Leith area. One of the three day nurseries, in particular, seemed to be attracting more applications from outside the area. In the first year 32% of their applications came from outside our area and in the second year 65% of their applications came from outside the area.

The demand for playgroup places

Provided that the child was old enough for the facility, in both years most children were given a playgroup place straight away.[29] There were 21 more applications for places in the second year than in the year before the advertising campaign. 15 of them were enquiries about places in private playgroups (Table 21).

There were 15 more applications for children under two and a half years of age and 16 more applications for children aged between two and a half and three years in the year after the advertising. In fact, in

[28] Chi Sq = 4.13. P is less than 5%.

[29] Some playgroups were taking children before they were two and a half years old.

TABLE 21

NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS TO PLAYGROUPS, BY THE AGE OF THE CHILDREN, IN THE TWO YEARS OF MONITORING

	Age at time of enquiry										
	Under 2		*2-2.5*		*2.6-2.11*		*3+*		*Totals*		
Year 1	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*All*
Private playgroup	—	4	—	6	2	1	8	2	10	13	23
Playgroup in premises	—	5	15	13	14	1	13	—	42	19	61
Total	—	9	15	16	16	2	21	2	52	32	84
Year 2											
Private playgroup	—	4	4	11	7	2	10	—	21	17	38
Playgroup in premises	1	22	6	7	23	2	5	1	35	32	67
Total	1	26	10	18	30	4	15	1	56	49	105

the first year 6, and in the second year 9, mothers said that they had chosen to apply to the particular playgroup in premises because they knew that children could start earlier than in other places.

Mothers applying for playgroup places for their children were asked how they found out about it. Only 3 specifically mentioned the advertising carried out for the project. In both years the major source of information was friends and neighbours. Whereas in the first year only 3 mothers said that they had found out about the playgroup from a health visitor or social worker, 10 mothers applying after the advertising campaign said this. It may be that rather than influencing people directly the advertising helped the professional people likely to be providing such information.

Most of the children who left playgroups over this two year period (63%) were starting primary school. However, 17% were going to go to a nursery school or a nursery class. It is interesting that only 3% of the children leaving a private playgroup were going to go to nursery units compared wit 25% of the children leaving playgroups in premises.

In the case of 6 playgroups the applications in both years came from a limited geographical area around the playgroup. Two of the 3

private playgroups, however, had applications from a much wider area. In one case this could partly be accounted for by a recent change of premises so that it was known about quite a distance away. Mothers were obviously prepared to travel further to these playgroups. Another exception was a Y.W.C.A. playgroup on the edge of our defined area of study. This attracted mothers and children from further afield possibly partly because there were fewer facilities available in the area adjoining the one we studied. It was possible to identify a wider catchment area in the second as opposed to the first year of our study in only one case. (Figure 4). This was a playgroup right in the centre of Leith. In the first year it received 8 applications from an area which can be broadly described as central Leith. In the second year it received 16 applications from all over the Leith area and one from outside the area altogether. Our advertising cannot have directly been the reason for this change since only 1 mother cited our advertising as a source of information. In both years the largest single source of information (54%) was friends, neighbours or relatives. Once again, the advertising campaign may have raised the level of information of the community in general.

The demand for places in nursery schools and classes

Some mothers start putting children's names on the nursery schools and classes waiting lists before their children are two years old. (Table 22).

TABLE 22

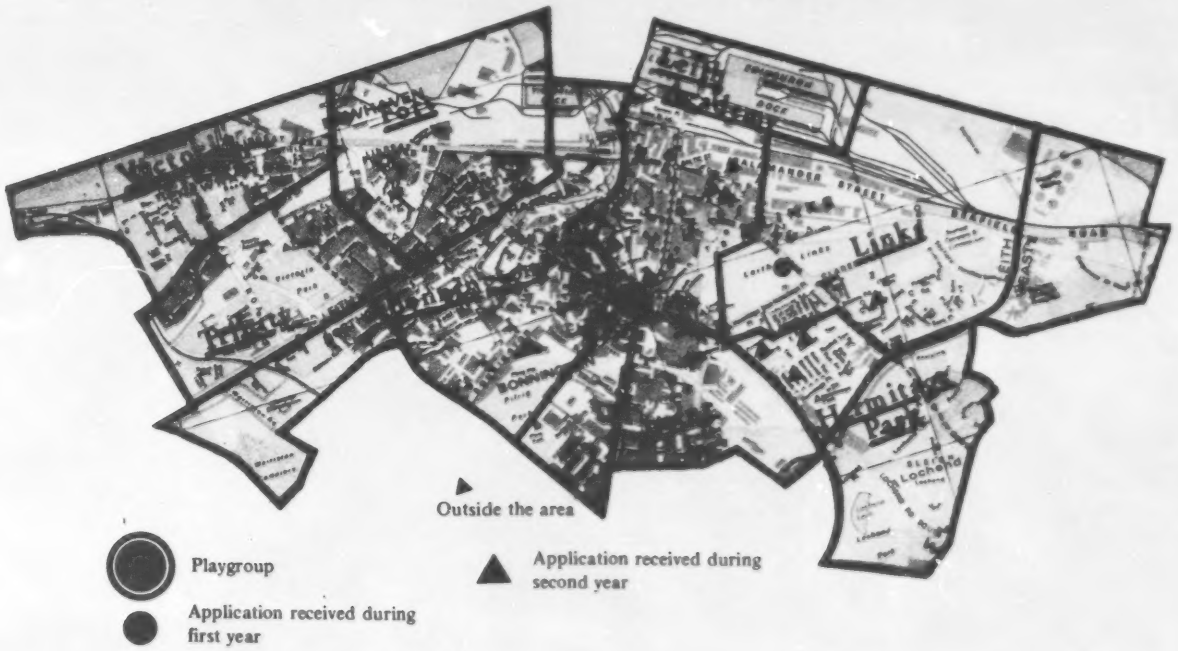
NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS TO NURSERY SCHOOLS AND CLASSES, BY THE AGE OF THE CHILDREN, IN THE TWO YEARS OF MONITORING

	Age at time of enquiry														
	Under 2		*2-2.5*		*2.6-2.11*		*3-3.5*		*3.6-3.11*		*4+*		*Totals*		
	Given place	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*Given place*	*Waiting list*	*All*
Year 1	—	8	—	81	14	38	38	10	26	11	24	2	102	150	252
Year 2	—	6	—	72	6	65	35	12	13	14	19	3	73	172	245

Although children are required to be three years old before they start to attend, a few begin in the last month of their second year. The advertising campaign did not increase the overall number of applications to nursery schools and classes. In fact, there were fewer applications in the year after the campaign than in the previous year.

FIGURE 4

CHILDREN APPLYING FOR PLACES IN THE PLAYGROUP IN THE CENTRE OF LEITH DURING THE FIRST AND SECOND YEARS



However, there was an increase in the number of mothers applying for places after their children were two and a half but before they were three years old (21% compared with 29%),[30] rather than after the children's third birthday. Thus, the advertising perhaps encouraged mothers to apply earlier than they otherwise would have done. However, only 2 mothers specifically mentioned the special advertising as the way that they had heard about the facility. They had seen the television programme.

The fact that more were applying at a younger age probably accounts for the fact that in the first year, of the children for whom applications were made once they were old enough, 21% went on a waiting list, compared with 30% in the second year.

Basically, the pattern of applications to the different units remained the same over the two years. Nursery classes attracted children living in the catchment areas of the primary schools to which they are attached. The reason for this is probably that it is the nearest, but also there are thought to be advantages in terms of the transition to primary school if the children have attended the nursery class attached. The two nursery schools attracted applications from a much wider area (Figure 5). Although in most cases the number of applications was approximately the same in the two years, there were two minor exceptions. A nursery school received more applications in the second year (52) than a very closely located nursery class (30) although in the first year the nursery class received more applications (59) than the nursery school (43).[31] Unfortunately, the people applying to the nursery school were not asked by the person dealing with their applications where they heard about the nursery school and so we do not know if it was because of the campaign. Since the headteacher, when we fist spoke to her about the project, complained about the lack of visibility of the nursery school to passers by, it is possible that the lists of facilities provided in the campaign helped it to become known. As the facilities in the area were competing for children, the gain of one was the loss of another.[32]

Most children stayed at the nursery unit until they went to school (82%). The most common reason for leaving, apart from this, was if the family was moving house (9%). Only 4 (1%) of the children were taken away because they were going to go to a different nursery unit and 6 (1%) left because they were going to go to a day nursery.

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[30] Chi Sq = 4.2. P is less than 5%.

[31] Chi Sq = 7.4. P is less than 1%.

[32] During the second year of monitoring the education department themselves were discussing the situation where there appeared to be more primary and nursery unit places than required. They eventually decided to merge two schools in one building outside our defined area so there will therefore be one nursery class less in the future.

FIGURE 5

CHILDREN APPLYING FOR PLACES AT A NURSERY SCHOOL AND A NURSERY CLASS IN LEITH DURING THE SECOND YEAR

* Dots outside Leith area not arranged to scale

Nursery School

Application to Nursery School

Nursery Class

Application to Nursery Class

Conclusion

An unfortunate conclusion is that we really do not know the extent to which we influenced the actions of the mothers of the pre-school children living in the area in which we carried out our intervention study. It would have required much more careful probing on the part of the people completing our monitoring forms to gain this type of information. Most of them omitted to ask the parent why they were applying here or where they had heard about it despite our continual reminders and their continued assurances that they were doing their best.

However, our door-to-door coverage when asking people if they had seen our leaflets, suggested that we were not really needed. Although people did gain information from the leaflets, posters and television recording, it is our opinion that these people would have acted in a similar fashion sooner or later anyway.

The influence of the intervention will tend to be underestimated for two main reasons. Information has been given to many mothers of very young children which may have had an influence on their plans for more than a year ahead. Secondly, the level of knowledge about facilities in the community in general has probably been raised in a way which may influence the pattern of demand and uptake for years to come.

The experience of talking to people about their knowledge of pre-school facilities during the course of this study led us to the conclusion that most mothers with children of the appropriate age to attend playgroups and nursery units, know at least of their existence. It seems useful to think of it as a working knowledge of the system. That is, they either know enough about it, or know someone who knows enough about it to get their child in. At least, that is true of an area where there was an abundance of these types of provision. Therefore, telling people about facilities may give them more knowledge, but in the majority of cases it does not affect their actions in that they do not take their children away from existing facilities and most of them still apply to the nearest facility. More knowledge may help them in other ways but the simple facts about the characteristics of different kinds of provision are largely irrelevant when most of the mothers already have some pre-school place for a child old enough. Unless people believe that there is no point in applying for places because there is no chance of a vacancy — a belief which advertising in itself would tend to negate — there is no reason to believe that advertising increases the demand for places in pre-school facilities as a whole. Our evidence suggests that it may make some facilities better known and it may make mothers apply earlier than they would otherwise have done.

4

WHAT DO PARENTS WANT OF PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES?

It is generally accepted that one of the main reasons why parents take their children to pre-school facilities is a social one. It is thought to be good for children to play with other children of their own age. In extreme cases it is argued that the child would be lonely at home because all the other children of this age in the area are attending pre-school facilities. For example, in recent years mother-and-toddler groups or one o'clock clubs have appeared in ever increasing numbers. These are occasions for mothers with very young children to meet for a cup of coffee and a chat and, once again, the children can play in each other's company.

However, certainly education authorities intend that nursery schools and classes should have a more positively educational function than this. Thus, money has been specifically directed towards disadvantaged or 'educational priority areas' in the hope of compensating for the lack of educational experiences in the homes of children living in such areas when compared with children living in more middle class areas. Since the Education Priority Areas programme in Britain and the Headstart project in the United States, which experimented with giving pre-school children structured teaching programmes, there has been an ongoing debate between administrators, politicians and academics about the extent to which the activities of children in nursery schools should be directed.[1] It is argued that play is increasingly chosen as the method of learning in a child-oriented society where the child spends a considerable number of years without being required to work.[2] Because play and thus

[1] Tizard, B. and Harvey, D., For example, 'Play: The Child's Way of Learning?' in *Biology of Play*, Spastics International Medical Publication, 1977, London, states that she is dismayed to find that officials in both social services and education departments in England often believe that attendance at a playgroup is one of the main requirements of black children from impoverished homes. Although she thinks that the playgroup and nursery school environment which is set up to promote child-initiated, individualised, free play with objects, may be beneficial, she feels that what is lacking is the opportunity to learn through interaction with adults.

[2] Department of the Environment, (1973), *Children at Play*, Design Bulletin 27, H.M.S.O.

learning experiences take place in any situation, this issue is relevant not only to nursery schools but also to play in the home, at mother-and-toddler groups, in day nurseries, children's centres, playgroups and so on. After reviewing recent literature on the topic, Peter Smith[3] concludes as follows.

> "There are no good psychological reasons for emphasising free play more than other activities, as far as learning in young children is concerned. It seems likely that what children learn or gain through play can just as well be learnt in other ways, as long as adequate motivation is present. We should still value free play as being enjoyable and a way of gaining experience. But we should not put it on a pedestal above other ways for children to learn about and cope with the world around them."

It is interesting to consider the extent to which this debate has filtered down to parents, or, alternatively, the extent to which parents have come to a similar conclusion themselves, namely that even in free-play situations motivation has to be maintained. In this chapter the requirements and preferences for the children of the mothers we interviewed are examined.

Why do they take them?

(1) Nursery schools and classes

The reason that most mothers in our sample gave for taking their child to a nursery school or a nursery class was that the child would benefit from the experience. Some mothers did not have any positive reason, as the following quotation indicates.

> "It just sort of happened. Someone said 'There'll be some space in the nursery. Put your name down.' I didn't really go out of my way to look for a nursery. It just sort of happened."

Only 6% of the children's mothers mentioned advantages to themselves. The benefits to the child mentioned ranged from having the opportunity to play with other children of their own age (61%), being in the company of their friends from the neighbourhood (6%), taking them away from the home environment which they were now finding boring (16%), to gaining educational stimulation (7%), preparation for school (24%) and a training in being independent (4%).

> "He used to play wi' a lot of kids up beside my mother and they all started nursery and then he had no one to play with,

[3] Peter K. Smith, 'Play is only one way to learn', in *New Society*, 27th July 1978, 180-182.

you know, and, um, nobody he could bring into the house and that, because they were all at nursery. So I went down to see the teacher, to see if I could get him in there."

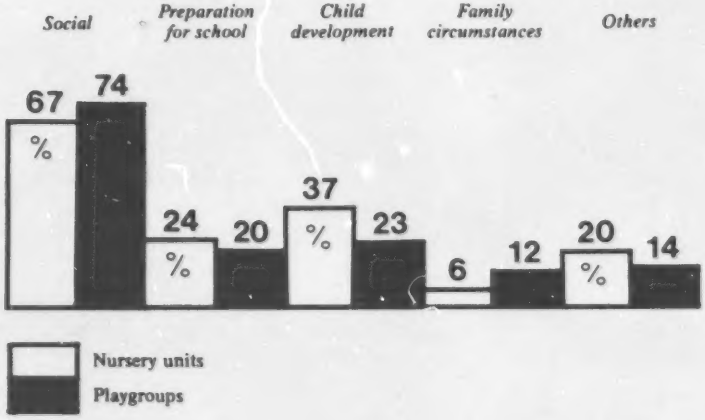
"Especially in the flats, they get fed up with nothing to do. You can't let them outside to play. If they're in the house, they get bored. So, with other kids, she can enjoy herself, play. That's the main reason she does go to nursery, so she can play with other kids."

"I just thought it would be good for them and, well, it would get them ready for school as well. 'Cause I thought if they were in here all day — like they never went to the nursery — by the time they went to school, they would probably scream."

"I took him because I thought it would do him good — I think it's good for them to go to nursery. (What do you think is the main benefit?) Well, I think, I think it teaches them, um, to be independent and more responsible for themselves and for how they think about things, you know, put their thoughts in the right perspective and let them realise that there is more to life than just their mummy and daddy and their domestic, you know, the closeness of the family. And that there are differences in children — at that school, it's a fine example of all the different nationalities in children . . . And I think it's good for them to mix with other children of other nationalities."

TABLE 23

REASONS FOR STARTING TO TAKE CHILDREN TO NURSERY UNITS AND PLAYGROUPS



In other words, the majority of mothers said that they took their child to a nursery unit because of the advantages to the child of a social nature. Set in this context, the following quotation is rather interesting.

> "He didn't like nursery at first. He quite liked the nursery but he said the kids got on his nerves!"

However, 5% mentioned that there were better facilities at the nursery school or class than they could provide at home and 9% said that there was nowhere for the child to play at home.

In some cases, the education system is seen in terms of a race. It is bad for a child to miss the entry to primary school by a few days because this puts the child a year 'behind'. From this point of view, nursery schooling is advantageous because it helps the child to settle down quickly to the business of learning in primary school. The following quotations illustrate this point.

> "The nursery is in the primary school. It's in a classroom in the school. So they adapt very easily to going to class 1 because it's in the next room. They see the other children and they see the teachers every day, so it's just another step."

> "I think, given that the majority of urban kids now do go to nursery school before they're four, means they're given a headstart on being able to cope with the kind of school environment, and with being with large groups of kids, so in that way it's an advantage, because that's what they're going to come across later on."

It is interesting to note in this connection that technically in the Lothian region, the children born between 21st August and 29th February could start school when they were 4½ years old or could wait a year until they were nearer 5½. However, in a survey of 10 such children in our sample in the city centre area it was found that the 6 located had all started primary school as soon as possible. We looked into it further and found that the reason for this was not just enthusiasm but also lack of knowledge. Only one mother said that she knew that she had this choice. However, the majority said that they would have sent their children anyway. They used phrases like 'ready for school' and 'fed up with the nursery'. One mother had reservations. She said that at that time she would have preferred her daughter to stay in the nursery class attached to the primary school because she was a 'babyish 4½'.

Similarly, when the mothers in our study with children currently attending nursery schools or classes were asked why they started to take the child at that particular time, for most it was a matter of the child having reached the appropriate age, defined either officially or

by the mother, or a place being available. Only 10% gave necessity as a reason. For example, 1% said they needed the place for their child because they had a new baby to look after, 2% said they needed the place so that they could start a job and 6% mentioned factors such as the family breaking up.

(2) Playgroups

The reasons that most mothers gave for taking their child to a playgroup were the same as those mothers gave for taking them to a nursery unit; namely, having the opportunity to play with other children of their own age (72%), being in the company of their friends (2%), taking them away from the boring home environment (9%), gaining educational stimulation (4%), as a preparation for school (20%) and a training in independence (6%).

> "I take him for his own sake, he needs somebody, he's got nobody here his own age and he needs the company, I think he's ... Before I took him, he was very withdrawn, you know, he wouldn't speak to anybody, but now, he's totally different."

13% of the children's mothers mentioned advantages to themselves.

> "I just wanted him out the road! It was the best thing 'cause the little girl, she's very energetic and she takes a lot out of me. And he was starting to fight with her, so I took the attitude, if you're going to fight, you may as well as fight with people your own age."

When they were asked why they started to take the child to the playgroup at that particular time, for most, again, it was a matter of the child having reached the appropriate age or a place being allocated. Mothers of 13% stated that it was necessary to start taking them at that particular time, for example, 3% said that they had to cope with the demands made on them by a new baby. 1% said that they needed it so that they could start work, and 8% mentioned other family problems.

> "Well, I was expecting Paul at the time and I didn't want her to get used to it because I thought well, with the two of them in the house, and he being a baby, you know, he'd need more attention and that, and she's awffy jealous that way, you see. So I thought if I got her interested in something else — so that's when I put in my application ... By the time Paul was born and that, she was able to go to the nursery."

> "Really just to suit myself because I was starting work, and I thought it would be easier to find a sitter for an hour and a half, than for two or three hours, because she's got lots of wee

cousins that used to come up and stay with her, you know, so I didn't find any need for companionship, you know. But it was really selfishness so I could go out and work."

(3) Day nurseries and Daycarers

In Lothian region day nurseries and the day caring service are free. A day nursery review panel meets every three months and decisions are made about the eligibility of applicants. It is also decided whether a daycarer or a day nursery place would suit the family and child best and which could be offered. Reports are received from Social Workers and Health Visitors, and anyone else relevant to a particular case. The circumstances of children with places are reviewed approximately every three months. This means, for example, if a mother has remarried and the reason for her having had the place was that she needed to work full-time, she will probably lose the place.

The question of why mothers started taking their children to a day nursery, or a daycarer, therefore, can have rather a different character from that of why mothers started taking their children to a nursery school or playgroup. These mothers did give us reasons which would have been considered to be appropriate by such review panels. For example, 36% of the children in our sample currently attending local authority day nurseries were doing so because their single parent went out to work. 25% of the children currently attending private day nurseries, which is a private arrangement between the mother and the nursery, had mothers who were working.

50% of the mothers with children going to a daycarer were going out to work and 16% spent their day studying. These again, were single parents.

The second major reason for mothers taking their child to a day nursery or a daycarer was some kind of stress situation as interpreted by the mother although it may have been seen more in terms of child development by the people allocating places.

"So this is why I took her out to the nursery, because I was bad with my nerves at the time, and I was really hammering Donna for nothing. I mean, the least little thing and that was it. She got it. I wasn't sleeping nights, 'cause it was in my mind that I was going to do harm to her. This is why I did go to the doctor."

"With me sort of drinking, always either drinking or getting over it, it was better that somebody was looking after her during the day . . . Perhaps if she had a normal sort of home environment where there was a mother and a father, where, sort of, mother is getting father's tea ready and what not and has got to think about somebody else, then it wouldn't be *so*

necessary. But, you know, with me being myself, living myself and everything I do, practically, is either for her or because of her, you know. And she knows that, which makes her selfish, because she's the only person in my life and she gets very, very jealous of anybody else coming into the house — and that's not good . . . I find that when she's with me all the time, I get irritable, not because she's there, I think it's because it's only her that's there. And everything she does, I notice. I notice when her face is dirty; I notice when her hair needs washed, it's sort of; I notice just now that her feet are dirty, they shouldn't be because she had a bath yesterday, and then, you know, just little things."

36% of children currently attending a local authority day nursery, 25% currently attending a private day nursery, and 33% looked after by a daycarer were there because the mother was in some kind of stress situation as exemplified by the above quotations.

The remaining 29% of mothers with local authority day nursery places who were probably allocated places on the basis of the value to the child's development said that they had started to take them because it was good for them to play with other children (14%), because they were bored at home (7%), or because they had nowhere to play (7%). The other children at private day nurseries had been taken because it was good for them to play with other children (25%) or the mother just needed a break from the child (25%). For example, one mother had spent most of her adult life in Thailand with servants to do all the housework and now found it difficult to cope with this and motherhood.

When asked why they started to take the child at that particular time, 25% said that this was when they started work, 17% that this was when they moved to live in this area, 8% that they lost a place in another facility at this time, 17% that they needed it at that time and 33% said that this was when a place was available for them.

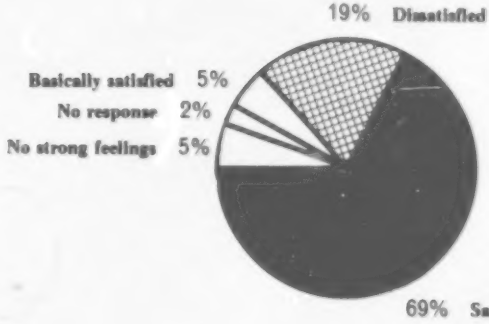
Do they approve of the activities in which the children are engaged?

(1) Nursery schools and classes

The reasons given by the 69% of the children's mothers who are satisfied with the type of activities in which the children engage, or who do not really mind, are as follows. For 39% of the children it was because these were the kind of things that they like doing, 25% were said to be learning through play, 14% were said to be too young to do other than play, and mothers of 14% of them liked the fact that they did things that they could not do at home. Other reasons given for a smaller percentage of children were that they have the opportunity to play with equipment not available in their own homes (9%), they

FIGURE 6

PERCENTAGE OF MOTHERS SATISFIED WITH THE ACTIVITIES IN WHICH THEIR CHILDREN ENGAGE AT THE NURSERY SCHOOL OR CLASS THEY ARE CURRENTLY ATTENDING



derive certain social benefits (8%), the children are allowed to do things of their own choice (5%) and the activities are arranged so as to accustom the children to a routine. Examples follow.

> "I wouldn't like it to be somewhere where formal education was carried out — that they, you know, had to sit down and be quiet — I think the way they go about educating the children is a very, very subtle way. I mean, children learn, they acquire knowledge but it's not thrust down their throats and they're not even aware that they're learning things."

> "He loves baking, but it's hectic in the kitchen with a child when you're baking, but you've got to put up with it. And, at the nursery, they're all geared to do baking with 3 year old children, 4 year old children. They have a little cooker there and they can take 3 children, you know, 'We'll do the baking today' and he can get the baking without making a mess in my kitchen, but they love it."

> "Well I'm not really sure about what I feel a nursery school ought to be doing. I think I really want it just for, you know, to get away from me and to meet other children and, sort of you know, making friends with other children and, you know, have a bit of fun."

Barbara Tizard reported[4] that many mothers did not understand what the traditional nursery programme, free play, was trying to achieve. She said that some Asian mothers thought that children were given sand to play with to carry over some of the enjoyment of the British days' outing to the seaside, and given water to play with to teach them how to wash up. In other words, there may be a discrepancy between the aims of the nursery school staff and the parents' understanding of the purpose of the various activities.

> "Children must decide what they wish to do and when they wish to do it — so there's no attempt to teach."
>
> "My impression is, suppose they say 'How do you draw a house?' — the answer is 'How do you think you draw a house?' 'What colour should I do it?' — 'What colour do you think you should do it?'. Everything gets a question — I feel they could guide more."
>
> "I think I prefer rote learning rather than play learning — but then it's sort of old fashioned. To learn through play and through not having to learn. (Do you think it's better for children by rote?) They inevitably have to, so they might as well start at the beginning. I thought it was quite good in its way — competitive. No, I think children enjoy it. Well, certainly I remember being, the stimulus of learning the tables and sort of seeing how far along the wall you could get."

The mothers of 25% thought that the children could be more profitably engaged. Basically, the criticisms made related to a lack of direct teaching (67%), a lack of structuring of activities (27%), and a lack of variety (13%). The latter two were more likely to be mentioned by wives of non-manual workers than wives of manual workers.[5]

> "The children are left pretty much to do what they want. Sometimes Duncan doesn't play with anything, he just runs up and down the stairs with another wee boy."
>
> "Jamie, in the whole of last year, he's hardly, very rarely come back with anything that he's done — painting wise or drawing wise, and they make things, they glue things together, but only if they want to, they don't have to."
>
> "Well, I don't mean formal learning, I mean, um, suggesting to them that they do something rather than just letting them play . . . I don't think at that stage they could sit down and say 'Right, just now we will do such and such'."

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[4] Barbara Tizard, 'Carry on communicating', The Times Educational Supplement, 3.2.72.

[5] Not structured enough Chi Sq = 9.04. P is less than 1%.
Not enough variety Chi Sq = 6.77. P is less than 1%.

However, 8% of the children's mothers did comment, as in the following quotation, that there was too much organisation and/or too much discipline.

> "Discipline, too much discipline — if they didn't behave, they sat in the corner for the whole session — at three year old — sat in the corner for the whole session — two hours."

Some mothers did not want teaching, in any formal sense, to begin in the nursery school.

> "I wouldn't like to think that he'd get, be sat down and teaching him to read and write and things like that. 'Course, I mean, he's going to be doing that all the rest of his life, and this is just to develop his mind. I certainly wouldn'ae send him if I thought he was going to sit and going to make him read and write and things."

> "Well, I don't want him to learn anything — poor child — he's got fifteen years ahead of him. I'm quite happy if he doesn't learn anything apart from social contact, and washing his hands, and playing with paints and water and sand. It's a bit difficult at home."

A few thought that their children were not ready for more.

> "Some children are really ready before school age to start counting and different things, but Pauline's not ready. I think she's quite happy as she is."

However, it was much more likely for a mother to say that she thought her child was exceptionally forward and therefore ready for something more.

> "My big worry is, because of her alertness, at present anyway, she's very anxious to learn and I am very concerned because I don't know of any nursery school, really, it's obviously not geared to teaching them as such, and she may be one of the odd ones out, but if she does continue as she is, that she wants to learn, I am very concerned, again, because she's my child, and I don't, quite honestly, I have my doubts as to whether she's going to learn a great deal from nursery school."

In fact, 15% of children currently attending nursery schools and classes, according to their mothers, were not learning anything whilst they were there. A single intake to primary school and the decreasing pressure for places, with the provision of more places and, in some areas, falling birth rates, means that some children attend a nursery school for two years. For similar reasons, in some areas, more children attend nursery schools for the full day rather than for the

morning or afternoon. For a three year old, attending for half a day, play may be considered enough. It obviously was by the mother making the following statement.

> "I mean, well, she's only three and I think they've got to play, they're also learning. I think you've got to play out your childhood. There's no sense in rushing into education too quick."

However, it may not be considered enough for a five year old.

> "This year I've been a bit worried because I felt he was getting a wee bit bored. I think he's ready for a certain amount of introduction reading and writing. My husband and I have had to do this at home which is a shame."

> "I still think, perhaps they could have done something more with the older ones as far as sort of teaching them and preparing them a bit more for school. They do nothing whatsoever. Not that I was looking for them to teach things specifically like reading and writing or such like, but I feel that now, at the end of his second year, he's doing exactly the same thing he was a year ago, which I feel is a shame — that perhaps it's been a wasted opportunity."

There was a significant association between the age of the child and whether or not the mother said that she was satisfied with the activities that her child engaged in whilst attending a pre-school facility.[6] 81% of children were thought by their mothers to be learning something. Wives of non-manual workers were more likely to say that their children were not learning anything than wives of manual workers.[7] However, this something ranged from learning certain skills (64%), to how to mix with other people (33%), elements of speech (21%), how to share (11%), how to be independent, particularly of their mothers (11%), and some discipline (8%). 5% specifically mentioned that their child was learning to read and write.[8] Wives of manual workers were significantly more likely to mention that their children were learning to mix with other children,[9] certain elements of speech,[10] and certain skills[11] at the pre-school facility they attended than were wives of non-manual workers.

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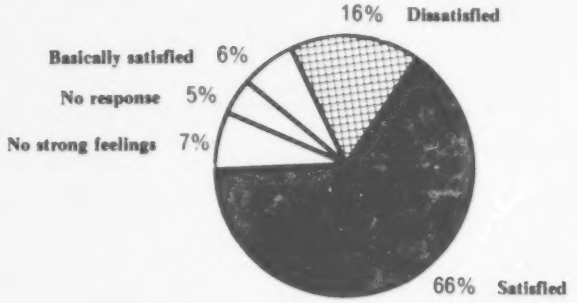
6 Chi Sq = 6.22. P is less than 5%.
7 Chi Sq = 3.85. P is less than 5%.
8 2 children attending local authority nursery classes, 2 children attending local authority nursery schools and 2 children attending a nursery class in a private school.
9 Chi Sq = 23.48. P is less than 0.2%.
10 Chi Sq = 6.23. P is less than 5%.
11 Chi Sq = 15.07. P is less than 0.2%.

(2) Playgroups

As with nursery schools and classes, the reason most frequently given for being satisfied with the activities of the children currently attending playgroups was that this is what the children like doing (59%). Similarly 29% were said to be learning through play and 29% were too young to do anything else. Whereas only 5% of these children's mothers mentioned their being able to do things that they could not do at home, 15% said they appreciated the use of facilities not available at home. Social advantages were mentioned by 12%, children being allowed to do the things that they like by 8% and becoming used to a routine by 3%.

FIGURE 7

PERCENTAGE OF MOTHERS SATISFIED WITH THE ACTIVITIES IN WHICH THEIR CHILDREN ENGAGE AT THE PLAYGROUP THEY ARE CURRENTLY ATTENDING



Those mothers who were not satisfied with their children's activities gave such reasons as the following. 59% of such mothers did not like the lack of direct teaching, 41% thought that the activities were not sufficiently structured and 18% complained of a lack of variety. On the other hand, 5% complained of too much organisation or discipline.

80% of children currently attending playgroups were said to be learning something whilst they were there. However, for 1% of these it was something that the mother would have preferred them not to

learn, such as bad language or how to be cheeky. 10% thought that their children were not learning anything or did not know whether they were or not. The type of things learned corresponded very closely with the type of things mothers with children at nursery units said that they were learning. Thus 62% mentioned certain skills, 38% that they were learning to mix with other people, 11% mentioned an improvement in their speech, 15% that they were learning to share, 9% that they were learning how to be independent and 8% mentioned that they were becoming accustomed to some discipline. 5% of the mothers who thought that their child was learning something said that they were learning to read and write.[12]

To some extent, similar responses from the mothers as to their approval of the activities in nursery units and playgroups can be explained by differential expectations. This is illustrated in the following quotation.

> "I think they go on more to, sort of, learning things — you know, sort of pre-school learning at the nursery, which, I mean, the playgroup is just a playgroup — for playing and not really learning."

This situation is satisfactory when mothers can take their child to what they see as the appropriate facility but comparisons such as the following become disquieting when such a choice of facilities does not exist.

> "They're (the nursery class) allowed to have up to 20 children a session — 10 children per adult — but they have nowhere near as many children as that. They have 3 sessions and in every session there are only 9 children and 2 teachers — so they have a lot of attention, it's very good. They can do things with each individual child, whereas at the playgroup, we had 30, 34 children and 1 supervisor and 2 mothers."

> "I really wanted her to go to the school because I feel it's a more, kind of, formal atmosphere, school atmosphere — although they do have . . . I don't mean it's like a classroom, but there's a more of a teacher attitude, and there it's strictly play, across in (playgroup) it's strictly play and I would rather, immediately before school, that she gets a wee bit more organised learning a bit, you know. They learn to cook and that kind of thing, you know."

Mothers of 18% of the children who have attended a playgroup in the past did not approve of the activities in which the child engaged whilst they were at the playgroup and another 15% said that,

[12] 2 children attending playgroups in premises and 4 children attending private playgroups.

although they thought the activities were suitable for their children when they first started to go, they became less suitable. An example follows.

> "Well, in the beginning I think, when they first go, they just want to play, to get used to other children and being away from mother. But as they get nearer school age, I think, where they go into little groups and help to do something that they haven't really done before or, you know, kind of, making little cakes or that kind of thing, you know. But a slightly more learning aspect on to it, when they're near, when they're quite ready for it, in a way, you know."

The reasons given were that the activities were not structured enough (50%), that the children were not specifically taught anything (11%), that there was not enough supervision (26%), and that there was not enough variety of activities (5%). On the other hand, 5% of mothers made statements indicating that there was too much organisation and determination of the children's activities.

When these mothers were asked why they stopped taking their child to the playgroup, 24% of them gave reasons other than such practical factors as the place closing down (17%), moving out of the area (20%), getting a place in a nursery school or class (33%) and so on. The non-practical reasons were the fact that the child did not like it (10%), the mother did not like it (2%), the children were not looked after properly (5%), and the child's friend stopped going (1%).

When this is compared with the movement out of nursery schools and classes we find that 34% of the 36 children who had attended a nursery school or class, or a different nursery school or class in the past, gave non-practical reasons for moving their children. 25% of such mothers said that their children did not like it, 3% that their children were bored and needed a change, 3% that they themselves did not like it and 3% that the standard of care was not adequate. However, 8% of the children who had not stayed at a nursery school or class for non-practical reasons had not reached 3 years old at the time and the other 72% were younger than 4 years old. Only 6% of them had stayed at the nursery unit more than three months. This seems to suggest that nursery unit facilities do not always suit the very young children but it may also suggest that parents and, probably, teachers are not too concerned if a child does not settle at this age because they can try again when they are a little older.

There is more movement out of playgroups than out of nursery units for non-practical reasons. 53% of changes of facility were from playgroups to nursery units and 7% of the changes were from nursery units to playgroups. As we saw in Chapter 1, this is to some extent

because these facilities are seen as steps in a sequence of stages in children's pre-school careers.

(3) Day Nurseries, Daycarers, Childminders

None of the mothers currently taking their children to a day nursery, a daycarer or a childminder said that they did not like the activities in which their children engaged whilst they were there. They generally approve because their children are able to do the things they enjoy doing (37%). Other reasons given for liking the way that the days are spent with a childminder or a daycarer were because the children can do as they like and because the routine which they get is good for them. The advantage of a routine is also mentioned by mothers currently taking their children to a day nursery (17%). These latter also mentioned the fact that the children can do things that they cannot do at home (8%), facilities not available at home (17%) and the fact that the children are learning something through the kind of play that takes place (25%).

When we examine responses to the same questions of mothers who used day nurseries in the past, we find that 21% of the mothers of the 19 children in this category said that they thought that improvements could have been made. They each mentioned either the lack of structure, not being taught anything, not being supervised enough, or not having enough variety of activities. The first two comments were made by mothers of children who had attended private day nurseries whereas the rest were made by mothers of children who had attended local authority day nurseries. In most cases, dissatisfaction with the activities was not the reason for taking the child away. Only 2 children (11%) were moved for non-practical reasons. One mother said that the child did not like the local authority day nursery and the other child moved from a private day nursery when she was old enough to get a place in a nursery school. The other reasons for stopping taking them were that they lost the place (47%), moved out of the area (16%), the hours at the place were no longer convenient because of a change in other circumstances (16%), the facility closed (5%), or the mother stopped work and did not need the place anymore (5%).

Four children had been looked after by a childminder and eight by a daycarer in the past. Two of their mothers (17%) said that they did not like the way that the child spent the day. One criticism was that they were not supervised sufficiently and the other was that there was not enough variety of activities. In fact these two mothers took their children away because they felt that the child was not looked after properly.

It was thought that 55% of the children presently attending a day nursery, a daycarer or a childminder were learning something from

the experience. Mothers of 25% thought that they were not learning anything and the others either did not know or did not answer the question. 86% were said to be learning to mix with others, 32% were learning to share, 32% were learning certain skills, 14% were learning to be independent, 9% were improving their speech, and 5% were becoming accustomed to some kind of discipline.

Advantages children derive from attendance at pre-school facilities

Overall, most mothers currently taking children to any kind of pre-school facility thought that it was advantageous to the children to go. Examples of advantages to children attending first a nursery class, secondly a playgroup and thirdly a day nursery follow.

> "Yes (it is an advantage for the child to go to nursery) because I've got a small city flat and a very low income, and the most of my friends' children are at nurseries or schools during the day. We don't have a garden to play in, so that to spend half the day there gives him some variety and enables me to be more positively with him for the half day that I am doing things with him, whereas if I was with him all day I expect I would run out of scope, too."

> "I think they gain from it, Barry's certainly gained — it makes them think. You know, he comes home and they've maybe been talking about trains and things, or a story and he'll tell me all about the story, so he's been listening, you know, I was surprised."

> "I think really any nursery helps them for school. At least they're getting away from their mums for that wee while and they're getting used to it — it disn'ae harm them when they go to school — breaks them in a bit."

However, just a few mothers currently taking their children thought it was disadvantageous. For example, mothers of 3% of children currently attending a nursery school or class said it was disadvantageous to the children and 2% said that there were both advantages and disadvantages. Those they mentioned were the lack of time spent with their mother, the acquisition of bad habits, the fact that it was upsetting for the children and the fact that the children were not kept fully occupied. Only one mother of a child currently attending a playgroup mentioned any disadvantages and this was the fact that her child was picking up bad habits. However 2 (33%) of the children currently being looked after by a daycarer were considered by their mothers to be suffering from it. They either thought that it was a disadvantage to the child not to be at home with them or that it was a disadvantage not to be in the company of more children of their own age.

The reason that these mothers continue to take their children to the facilities is that there is some advantage to themselves. Although it makes no difference one way or the other to some, most mothers said that it was advantageous to them to take their children to a nursery school or class (80%), a playgroup (84%), a day nursery (83%), a daycarer (67%), or a childminder (100%). The most frequently stated reasons why it is an advantage to take them to a nursery unit or a playgroup are that it gives mothers a break from their children (57%) and gives mothers time for housework (24%), (Table 24).

> "At least I know I've got peace to have my bath, instead of them battering in and out all the time, you know, you cann'ae lock the door 'cause you don't know what they're getting up to."

The most likely reason for it being an advantage for a mother to take her child to a day nursery, daycarer or childminder is that it enables the mother to work (70%, 60% and 100% respectively).

TABLE 24

ADVANTAGES TO MOTHER OF TAKING CHILD TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES

	Nursery unit	*Playgroup*	*Day nursery/ Daycarer/ Childminder*
	%	%	%
Time for housework	28	21	11
Time for other children	7	7	5
Satisfaction in knowing child happy	3	8	5
Improvement in relationship with child	23	14	26
Enables them to work	9	7	74
Helps them to meet people	6	11	—
Involvement themselves	—	6	—
Provides a break from child's company	56	58	37
Others	2	4	—
Number of children attending facility with mothers who said it was an advantage to them	150	113	19

Those mothers who said their children's attendance at a pre-school facility was a disadvantage to them were referring, in all but one instance, to the inconvenience of taking them and the fact that they missed their children's company. The exception was a mother who takes her child to a playgroup and sees it as a disadvantage to herself because she does not like participating. This aspect is examined in the next chapter.

5

THE EXTENT TO WHICH PARENTS WANT TO BE INVOLVED

Although parental involvement in nursery education is espoused at national[1] and local authority level, there is considerable diversity in the extent to which people are in favour of it at ground level. Further, there is often a divergence of opinion about the nature and extent of parental involvement when the perspectives of staff and parents are compared. For example, a study carried out in Birmingham recently found that whereas eight of the eleven nursery units and three of the four playgroups studied, were in favour of some kind of parental involvement, the parents studied mentioned being involved in only four out of over forty different groups mentioned.[2]

The extent to which parents wish to be involved in any way in their children's pre-school education and care is obviously related to their perceptions of possible opportunities for involvement. This varies between examples of the same kind of facility but there are more basic differences between nursery schools or classes, day nurseries and playgroups. Let us examine these differences, first of all from the point of view of the provision.

Nursery schools and classes provide a professional staff. Parents are generally required to stay until the child settles happily into the group and a parent may be required to take her turn in attending a session. Individual nursery units vary in the use made of mothers whilst they are attending. In some cases her role may be indistinguishable from a teacher or nursery nurse whereas in others, she may be required to fulfil a support role such as looking after particular equipment or the book corner. Again some nursery head teachers or assistant head teachers of the primary school in the case of nursery classes, may regularly consult with parents about decisions being made, others may just transmit information about decisions. Ultimately, however, decisions rest with the teacher, school and local education authority.

Day nurseries are similar to nursery units in that, in most cases,

[1] D.E.S.: *Education: a framework for expansion*, Cmnd. 5174, H.M.S.O., 1972, para. 29.

[2] Halsey, A. H. and Smith, T.: op. cit.

parental attendance is not required and may not be possible, given that single mothers will probably be working and many of the other mothers have been given a place for the child because they cannot cope personally. However, some day nurseries do try to involve mothers in fund-raising, encourage them to stay with the child whenever possible and invite them to meetings at which issues are discussed. However, again, ultimately decisions are made by the officer in charge and the Social Work Department. The staff are trained nursery nurses or, in a few isolated cases, nursery teachers.

The whole ideology of the playgroup movement centres on the argument that through self-help groups both parents and children learn and grow. There may be a discrepancy between ideology and action. It seems to be difficult to prevent some mothers adopting the 'playgroup leader' role and being unwilling to give it up. If a mother attends a few courses run by the Social Work Department, she may come to be seen by the parents as an expert and better able to play with the child than they can themselves. As Penelope Leach[3] points out, the playgroup movement ideology is distorted even at governmental level. She gives as an example the following quotation from a 1978 report by the Central Policy Review Staff.[4]

> "One of the more important benefits of the spread of playgroups . . . is the opportunity they give to hard-pressed parents to have a break from the demands of small children . . . "

Are the authors of this report simply being realistic? Our data suggest that perhaps they are. Let us look first at a very simple level at the contact that mothers of pre-school children in our sample had with the facilities that their children were currently attending.

22% of the children currently attending playgroups, 7% of the children currently attending a nursery school or class and 17% of the children at day nurseries had mothers who did not have the contact with the facility gained by taking and collecting the child. The difference between nursery units and playgroups can be accounted for by the fact that children living in rural areas were more likely to go to a playgroup than children living in Edinburgh and were more likely to go by car with a group of children, or to be allowed to go alone.

Of those who did take them themselves, mothers of 21% of the children currently attending a nursery school or class, 21% of the children currently attending a playgroup and 33% of those attending day nurseries said that they did not go into the facility. Even the

[3] Leach, P., *Who Cares? A New Deal for Mothers and their Small Children*, Penguin, 1979.

[4] Central Policy Review Staff, *Services for young children with working mothers*, H.M.S.O., 1978.

mothers who did go in were likely to stay for only five minutes to take off the child's coat, tick off her name on a register and so on; this was the case for 59% of the children currently going to a nursery school or class, 35% of those going to a playgroup and at least 33% of the children going to a day nursery. 10% of nursery unit children's mothers, 6% of playgroup children's mothers and 25% of day nursery children's mothers said that they stayed until the child was settled. Apart from playgroup leaders, nobody said that they stayed all the time that the child was at one of these places. However, 1% of mothers of nursery unit children and 28% of mothers of playgroup children said that they stayed all the time on rota days. From the parents' perspective there is not as much contact with any type of pre-school facility as reading, for example, some of the Pre-School Playgroups Association literature would lead us to believe.

Wives of manual workers were more likely than wives of non-manual workers to say that they stayed all the time or on rota days at the playgroup.[5] This seems to be accounted for by the rather different character of playgroups. Some were attended by more middle class than working class children and vice versa. In addition, some playgroups require and encourage more parental participation than others (Appendix IV, Table 41).

TABLE 25

ACTIVITIES OF MOTHERS WHILST THEIR CHILDREN ARE AT NURSERY UNIT, PLAYGROUP OR DAY NURSERY

	Nursery unit	*Playgroup*	*Day nursery*
	%	%	%
Shopping	30	27	8
Housework	65	64	25
Work or study	17	14	50
Social activities	13	10	—
Time spent with other children	11	10	17
Others	17	19	17
No response	6	1	8
Number of children	197	134	12

Let us look at the reasons for this limited amount of contact, first in terms of what the mothers are doing whilst their children are at different places. The vast majority of mothers with children at playgroups and nursery schools are taking the opportunity of the child being away to do housework or shopping (Table 25). Whereas 50% of the mothers of children at day nurseries are working or studying at this time, only 17% and 14% respectively, of nursery unit

[5] Chi Sq = 9.27. P is less than 1%.

and playgroup children's mothers are spending their time in this way. Nevertheless, the fact that 14% of the children at playgroups had mothers who were working or studying at that time has important implications for the extent to which they could be involved in the day-to-day activities of the group.

Another aspect of the limited amount of contact that mothers have with the pre-school facility their children currently attend is their desire to be present. 5% of children at nursery units and 1% of children at playgroups had mothers who said that they would like to stay and help at the sessions[6] but they were not encouraged to do so by the staff.

> "You're not discouraged to stay but you're not encouraged either. You know, it's a case of 'You can come into the nursery' and see what they want you to see and then, you know, 'Bye-bye, Mummy'."

> "You don't really feel as though you're wanted. You know, when you take him in, they're sort of wanting you out of the road so they can get on, you know, everything sort of stops when you're taking them in, you sort of feel out of place."

Some felt that they needed the time for the things that they did whilst the children were there (13%). However, more usually they stated that they did not stay at the playgroup or nursery unit because their children do not like them to (5%), do not need them to (14%) or because it is better for the child if they do not stay in terms of learning to be independent (12%).

> "He's happier when I'm not there. Because he always wants me to watch this, and do this and do that. The lady that takes it says they are much better when parents aren't with them, 'cause they'll play with the other children. You know, they'll interest themselves more because they're not worried about what you're doing and are you watching them, and things like this."

> "I don't see any point in me sitting watching him play and him knowing that I'm there."

> "If she thinks that I'm going to be there all the time, when she starts at school, she may be expecting me to be there as well. I feel it would be less of a shock for her if I wasn't there. Then when she starts at school, well, she's there on her own. There's nothing I can do about it."

There are many different kinds of involvement. However,

[6] No significant social class difference.

according to Grubb and Lazerson,[7] one of the lessons about parental participation learned from the California Children's Centres is that parents must be offered meaningful involvement, in other words, decision-making power.

> " . . . only by giving parents final decision-making power, including power over hiring administrators as well as other staff members, will parents be guaranteed sufficient responsibility and access to the daily operations and decisions of centres to stimulate their involvement. Within that framework, staff and parents can disagree and negotiate over the methods and content of care, but if parents are given only a consulting role rather than power over final decisions their influence and motives to participate are likely to grow steadily weaker."

We tried to distinguish the extent to which mothers of children in our sample were involved in terms of administration or decision-making and in terms of actually being present at sessions. We found that there were varying degrees of involvement described by mothers as having a say in the running of the facility (Table 26).

TABLE 26

MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE POSSIBILITY OF INVOLVEMENT IN RUNNING NURSERY UNITS, PLAYGROUPS AND DAY NURSERIES

	Nursery unit	*Playgroup*	*Day nursery*
	%	%	%
Help in the organisation	4	51	—
Rota of helpers	8	16	—
Can make suggestions	4	2	—
Help to raise funds	7	2	8
No say in the running of the facility	68	25	67
Do not know	9	2	17
No response	1	1	8
Number of children	197	134	12

As we would expect, mothers were more likely to say that they could help in the organisation of playgroups than of nursery units and day nurseries.[8] 25% of the children at playgroups, nevertheless, had mothers who said mothers were not involved in decisions about the running of the playgroups at any level. Fewer mothers were

[7] Grubb, W. N. and Lazerson, M., 'Child Care, Government Financing, and the Public Schools: Lessons from the California Children's Centres', *School Review*, 86, 1977, 1-37.

[8] Chi Sq = 98.68. P is less than 0.2%. No social class difference.

actually involved in running the pre-school facility their children attended than could, according to their perceptions, do so (Table 27).

TABLE 27

MOTHERS' ACTUAL INVOLVEMENT IN RUNNING NURSERY UNITS, PLAYGROUPS AND DAY NURSERIES

	Nursery unit	*Playgroup*	*Day nursery*
	%	%	%
Helps in the organisation	2	27	—
Stays on rota days	2	20	—
Makes suggestions	2	1	—
Helps to raise funds	4	1	8
No response	1	1	—
Number of children	197	134	12

Their actual involvement in the organisation or presence at sessions of nursery schools and classes and day nurseries is minimal. Considerably fewer mothers are actually involved in the organisation of playgroups (27%) than say that they could theoretically be (51%). However, some of the mothers who say that mothers are involved in the organisation, although they are not themselves, state that they do stay on rota days (4%).

Mothers with very different degrees of involvement and interpretations of what it meant to help in the running of the playgroup, considered it to be advantageous to them.

> "I like being involved in it (playgroup). Going places like the Fire Station, the Commonwealth Pool, all these sorts of places. You're not sitting in the house bored all the time. you know, you're doing things."

They stressed the social side.

> "It's quite a social thing really. You know, there's quite a few people that go there (playgroup) that are quite friendly. It's quite a nice sort of community feeling there too."

Others suggested that it was a help to mothers to be involved because they could learn something from the experience.

> "I think that, for example, the mothers coming along to our playgroup learn some of the things that the girl in charge is doing — they act mimes and all these kinds of things — what the children are actually capable of making. I think they learn a tremendous amount about how to keep their own children occupied and how to help them out."

Some mothers who were not involved in the organisation of the facilities at present said that they would like to be. In fact, 17% of children at nursery units, 4% of children at playgroups and 17% of children at day nurseries had mothers who said that they would like to be involved. The main reason given by mothers with manual worker husbands was that they would find it interesting (65%). The only other reason given by this group was that they think that mothers should be involved (10%). Mothers with non-manual worker husbands, on the other hand, said they would like to be involved because they feel that they could contribute (5%), because they would like to make changes (24%), as well as because they think that parents should be involved (24%) and because they would be interested (43%).

Nevertheless, large numbers of mothers did not wish to be involved with running the facility. The reasons they gave for not wishing to be involved varied according to their perceptions of possible types of involvement. Thus mothers who were thinking in terms of being involved in an administrative sense, stated such reasons as not being the type of person that is good at organising or not liking to do it (3%) and being quite satisfied with the place as it is (16%). The mother in the following quotation speaking about a nursery class, in fact, was expressing the sentiments of many.

> "I think if it's organised by a properly qualified teacher, as I know it is, and run under the auspices of the Local Authority, then, you know, one sort of assumes that it's run fairly well and I wouldn't sort of assume to have any say in how it was run really."

Similarly, in the next quotation a mother was suggesting that a lack of decision-making power on the part of playgroup children's parents was advantageous

> "I'm a believer in the person who's running the playgroup being the one to dictate principally what should happen, but any ideas should be welcomed. But I mean, if I were running the thing, I would want to have it all my own way except for odd ideas, which would be welcomed."

Some mothers were thinking more in terms of their actual physical presence during sessions and gave reasons such as not having the time (7%), not liking a room full of children (5%), not getting on with the other mothers (1%) and being bored with helping (4%). Wives of manual workers were more likely to say that they had not the time than wives of non-manual workers.[9] The following quotations are examples of such statements.

[9] Chi Sq = 4.61. P is less than 5%.

"I've no intention of becoming involved. I adore playing with my own child but I really can't stand other people's. I'm not that fond of children, I find him very entertaining and very good fun. I have plenty of patience with him but other people's children I don't care for. I think one has to accept that I enjoy my work and I would much rather do that."

"My own two are bad enough but another twelve screaming around. It's not my idea of fun!"

"You feel a bit spare hanging about (at the playgroup) if you're not on the rota."

However, the reason most frequently given for not wishing to be actually present at sessions was a lack of confidence in their own and other parents' abilities (31%). This ranged from very simple statements such as the first two following quotations to the more complex argument about 'suitable' parents in the third quotation.

"I don't think I've got enough confidence in myself to dae anything like that."

"I've no' got the – I don't even like to read stories to him. I just say, 'Oh, read it yourself'."

"I think I'd rather let the nursery teachers get on with it. I'm not too keen on, on mothers joining in. I think you sometimes get the wrong mothers who do it. I mean, I have one or two neighbours who are, sort of, education fanatics and, you know, sort of have their child at, sort of, book 10 before they start school, of 'Janet and John' and 'Peter and Jane' or whatever it is. I don't know, I think, I think, if it depends on the situation. I mean, if they're short of assistants, obviously some sensible mothers are fine. But then, how do you know which mothers are going to come forward? And if the wrong people volunteer, what are you going to do about it? Because it could be very harmful. And, I mean, especially at nursery, I mean, if they make a hash at nursery, they're going to put the child off proper school, which is fatal."

In some cases, this belief in the expertise of trained staff led to a preference for nursery schools or classes rather than playgroups.

"They do very well (at the playgroup) but it's just like a couple of mothers taking in the kids. They're doing their best, granted, you know, but I just don't think it's on the same basis as a nursery. It's just not comparable. It's a good stand by. It's what would you say, just second best, let's say. I'd rather have that than nothing at all, you know."

The overall picture of the facilities attended by the children in our sample is certainly not one of extensive parental participation, at any level, in the activities of the facility. A few playgroups actively encourage parents to attend sessions by having a rota of mother helpers and these account for the majority of cases of parental involvement.

Some mothers would like to be involved in the organisation of playgroups and nursery units. The reason that they gave most frequently was that they thought that it would be interesting. However, the majority said that they did not want to be, felt that they had enough to do with their household chores and welcomed the break from the company of the children attending the facility. There was very little difference, in this respect, between mothers with different social class backgrounds. Similar proportions of the wives of manual and non-manual workers said that they preferred professional people to be looking after their children rather than volunteers, and similar proportions were interested in being involved themselves.

It seems then that the majority of mothers of three to five year olds are quite willing to leave their children at a nursery unit or a playgroup for a few hours whilst they get on with their housework, spend time with their other children or go out to work for a few hours. This does not conflict with their basic beliefs that pre-school children need their mothers at home with them. Many of them liked the fact that in nursery units professionally trained people were responsible for their children and felt no compulsion to be present themselves.

Two questions which then arise are how mothers who leave their children for longer periods each day feel about the separation and to what extent they make a distinction between professionals and 'other mothers' caring for their children.

Four children in our sample currently spend their day with a childminder, 12 at a day nursery and 6 with daycarers. 4 children had previously spent the day with a childminder, 19 at a day nursery and 6 with a daycarer. 60% of these 53 children were separated from their mothers for more than six hours per day. 85% of them were separated from their mothers on five days each week, 55% of these children had working mothers, 11% had mothers who were engaged in a full-time course of study and 34% spent their day at a day nursery or with a daycarer because their mother was under some kind of stress. There was hardly any parental involvement in terms of actual physical presence because 66% of the children were there because their mothers needed, or wanted, to be elsewhere.

All the mothers who took their children to a childminder were either studying or working. In 3 cases it was necessary for the mothers to work for financial reasons. One was an unmarried mother. In

other such cases the children spent the day with a daycarer or in a day nursery. Apart from these 3 mothers, all those currently taking their children to a childminder made no adverse comments about the arrangements. They all worked; their jobs ranged from a university lecturer to an assistant in a butcher's shop. On the contrary, they thought that their children gained in terms of learning to be independent and in having the company of other children. Some of them commented on the advantages of a one-to-one relationship for the child rather than an institutional situation.

> "I think I much prefer childminders because I think it's a much better substitute in a sense because it's the same kind of care, really, that you get at home when they're small. And, um, I think nursery care is good but I think they have to be a certain age to be able to cope with it, in a sense, and cope with the sort of mixing with large groups."

However, the 3 mothers who had to work all mentioned disadvantages in the arrangement. Missing seeing the child growing up was a disadvantage.

> "It is definitely a disadvantage, you miss them growing up, you know."

A difference of opinion between mother and childminder about some aspect of child-rearing could also cause problems

> "There are things that she does for him that I would never dream of doing, you know, and I don't agree with everything she does. When he's with her, it's up to her but when he's with me, it's up to me, sort of thing."

Those mothers then who had made their own arrangements to have their children looked after for some part of the day whilst they chose to go out to work did not express any concerns about the effect on their children. However, mothers who have been provided with daycare places by the Social Work Department were much less likely to be satisfied. This may have been because they did not choose the particular daycarers themselves or because separation from their children was forced upon them rather than their choosing to work. Criticisms were made of specific daycarers. For example, one mother who took both her children to a daycarer because she had nervous problems said that she stopped taking them because she was not satisfied with the standard of care. The children were not fed and did not have their nappies changed properly. She arrived early one day to find the daycarer's family eating a meal and her eldest child sitting at the table but not being given food. The youngest was left in his pram beside a busy road for hours on end. She complained to the Social Work Department but gained the impression that they did not take

her seriously because they thought, in the light of the reason for her being given daycare places, that this was all in her imagination. Another mother who had been given daycare places for her twin sons for similar reasons said that she thought the experience was bad for them because the daycarer swore a lot and the boys picked this up. She, like many others, felt guilty about not being able to cope herself.

> "From my point of view it was good that they were away, just out of the road, but I felt it was a shame, putting them there, because I was here, you know what I mean."

A similar sentiment was expressed by another mother.

> "At first, well, I used to feel a bit funny without her, you know, all day, it didn't seem right somehow and it took a long time to get used to that — that she wasn't here. You know, you sort of get a guilty conscience about it."

It is very easy for such mothers to be concerned that the daycarer might be performing the mothering function better than they themselves. For example, one mother did not like the fact that the daycarer was trying to teach the child to speak. It was mainly for this reason that 5 out of 14 mothers were annoyed that they were offered a place with a daycarer rather than a place in a day nursery. The following quotation from an interview with a mother who is an alcoholic illustrates this very vividly.

> "I didn't really like her going (to a daycarer). I'd rather she went to the nursery from the start . . . If you take them to someone else's house, they teach them differently from what you teach them. I'll give you an instance what she does. She'll (child) say, 'Annette (daycarer) doesn't tell you to do it like that. Annette says to do it like this'. Well, I don't like other people telling her to do it. Another person is telling her. I want her to do it my way because, after all, she's my daughter. It used to annoy me when she said, 'Annette tells me to do it this way. Don't put the socks that way, Annette says to fold them back'. You know, I used to say 'This is annoying'. I felt it was like two mothers. It doesn't work that way with two mothers."

A mother who did not make specific criticisms, nevertheless, made a disquieting comment about the daycarer's other responsibilities.

> "She's very good to him but she's got her own house to run as well, you know, she looks after him okay but she's no time to play. You can't expect that of her anyway. She's just there to look after him."

A study of the relationship between forty two-year-olds and their

childminders in London[10] paints a rather depressing picture of the lack of interaction between children and minders which suggests that the minders are far from trying to be substitute mothers. When account is taken of the fact that these were all registered minders, with reasonable housing and who had a fairly stable minding relationship with this child, doubt is cast on the assumption of many mothers that a one-to-one relationship is the best for the child. In fact, the authors of this report come to the conclusion that a day nursery situation may be better in the sense that the staff are freed from other responsibilities, are not unduly worried about damage to the physical environment and have specifically entered this line of employment because of an interest in children or child development. They point out that being able to bring up one's own children is rather different from forming an attachment to and caring for other people's children and interacting with the children's mothers. It is interesting from this point of view that two of the mothers in our sample who were quite happy with their childminding arrangements took their children to the house of someone who had already been a friend.

Some children spent their day in a day nursery specifically because it was thought that the day nursery environment was better for them than the home environment. This could be either directly because of the mothers' characteristics or problems or because the child was not developing according to the usually accepted pattern. Such mothers were provided with a free place in a local authority day nursery and were generally appreciative of the advantages to themselves and the child. For example, one mother who had been given a place because she was in such a state that she had started physically assaulting her youngest child, described how the child was making rapid progress in terms of speech and general development as follows.

> "She's learning something new every day whereas if she's in the house and that she's no' really learning. A mother's got too much to do, like washing."

Another mother who was given a place for the sake of the child's development explained the advantages she was gaining.

> "I think she needed to go. She was a child on her own all the time and now she's improved a lot. She's made friends there. It's also good for her to be away from her mother and gradually get used to this."

However, she admitted that advantages to herself were now the reason she continued to take her.

> "It's fantastic because I've been able to go out and work which I couldn't do before."

[10] Mayall, B. and Petrie, P., *Minder, Mother and Child*, University of London Institute of Education, 1977.

This more positive side of separation from their children was seen by the three mothers who were currently taking their children to private day nurseries. One of them started taking her child when she was teaching part-time at university. Now, although she spends the day at home with a baby, she continued to send the child because she thought it was good for him.

"It's very much part of his life. He has a lot of friends there."

A second took her child to a private day nursery for part of the day whilst she helped in her husband's business. Her working helped her in that previously she had been nervous and depressed. However, she described the day nursery in glowing terms and said that her son was learning stories, rhymes, songs, colours and to count. All this was important to her because she wanted him to pass an entrance examination for a Merchant Company School when he was four and a half years old.

The main criticisms of local authority day nursery facilities came from two single mothers. The criticisms made related to the age, number and quality of staff. One of these mothers is quoted below.

> "I'd like to see it better run because I don't think it's run properly. I mean, half the staff up there just couldn'ae care less. For a wee while things of her's (child's) were going missing. When she was a baby, you were getting wrong nappies back and that, and if you said to them they would just give you the sort of attitude, just couldn'ae care less, and it used to annoy me."

However, it was more usual for the mothers to feel that the day nursery environment and the handling by professional staff offered the children more than they could themselves. Examples follow.

> "Well, I never had any experience with bairns afore I had her. No, I wouldn'ae have kenned the first thing to do, so I was glad they done it all for me."

> "I think they do more for him there than I could do at home because they have regular times like when he goes to the potty, when he takes a nap, and his tea times. He doesn't get that at home. Regular times like that. He should and I'm striving for it but I think it's important he should get it some place."

It is interesting that the two single fathers who took their children to day nurseries were very satisfied with the provision and did not mention any feelings of guilt about leaving the child there all day. Some of the mothers did have terrible inner conflicts. An example is a mother who took her baby to a day nursery whilst she finished her

university degree course. She did not think the baby was given enough attention and said that she still feels guilty about it. Similarly, a mother doing a college course regretted ever starting it because she felt that attendance at the day nursery had a deleterious effect on her child's health.

Some mothers were rushing off to work, often with considerable journeys each day, and therefore only had the time to deliver and collect their children. Others were relieved to hand them over to other people, particularly to people who could cope better than they could themselves. However, for whatever reason, there was very little parental involvement in day nursery provision. Some mothers blamed the facilities and the staff. It was said of both local authority and private day nurseries that the staff did not like mothers hanging around.

> "They used to take the baby off you when you went in and when you were going away, they used to just have him ready."

> "It was an old house and I used to be allowed up the stairs but I had to leave him at the door so I never saw the room, or rooms that he lived in . . . I used to see through the crack in the door. That's all I ever saw, babies sitting in cots . . . When they've got a nursery full of tiny babies they're so concerned about things like hygiene, they just don't want anyone else in there. I think that was the attitude. It's a bit like a hospital."

Just as with nursery units and playgroups, most parents did not want to be involved with the organisation of day nurseries, or to be present at sessions, but some of them would have liked to know more about what happened to their children and there are several indications in this chapter of a lack of understanding and communication between mother and day nursery staff, daycarers and childminders.

6

WHY ARE THERE NON-USERS, IRREGULAR ATTENDERS AND DROP-OUTS?

The reasons people give for not currently using facilities is a most important element in planning for the future. It is often assumed that if more facilities are provided more people will use them. This is based on the belief that it is the inaccessibility of existing facilities which accounts for non-use. However, not everybody wishes to have a pre-school place for their child even if such places are available.[1] Unfortunately, it is often mothers of children who are defined by various outside agencies as most in 'need' of experiences outside the home who are not attending nursery units and playgroups. This is part of a complicated situation in which planning tends to be in terms of areas whereas as the Educational Priority Areas projects[2] underlined, there are many disadvantaged children outside the most severely disadvantaged areas, and within areas, it is not always possible to reach the most disadvantaged children. In this chapter the characteristics of people not using facilities are examined in the context of the area in which they live.

'Non-users' in mixed social class areas

The numbers of non-users within any one-mile radius, near enough

1 Van der Eyken, W. H. and Shinman, S., *Socio-economic Constraints on the Public use of Community Playgroups*, S.S.R.C., Final Report HR 1944/2. (1975). One of the conclusions of this study which was carried out in the London Borough of Hillingdon in 1974 was that "The fact that 29 per cent of the sample did not want to use pre-school provision for one reason or another despite the fact that the provision was near their home and a place was guaranteed for their child must be considered a strikingly high figure, and one that in a 'blue collar' working class neighbourhood, seriously begs the assumptions of the Plowden Committee and other surveys which have suggested an almost universal demand."

2 Halsey, A. H., (Ed.) *Educational Priority, Vol. I., E.P.A. Problems and Policies*, H.M.S.O., London, 1972.

for mothers to take young children[3], seem small.[4] In most cases there would not be enough to fill for example, a new nursery class even assuming that all the mothers had a preference for the same kind of facility. When areas in Lothian Region with a reasonable social class mix[5] are examined the reason for non-attendance is not the shortage of facilities.

Overall, in the three mixed social class areas studied, 3.5% of the mothers interviewed had not previously taken, and did not intend taking, their pre-school children to any kind of provision before they went to school. This was 4% of the mothers interviewed living in the city centre area, 2% of those living in the area on the outskirts of the city and less than 5% of mothers living in the country. Although the slightly higher percentage in the latter case is due to the travelling difficulties of mothers living on isolated farms and so on (6) over half such mothers (4) did not seem to be especially disappointed about the inaccessibility of such facilities. The following quotation is typical in that it suggests that the travelling difficulties were only partly the reason.

> "I've got a two mile walk, you see, it's a long way for a wee one to walk down the road. If there was one near here, not so far to walk, I dare say I would have taken her . . . It's never made any difference to the other two. They get on fine at the school, you know. And she plays with children round here, you know."

The others (2), however, suggested that they would like to use facilities if it were at all feasible.

There were mothers living in Edinburgh for whom it was not easy to arrange to take children to playgroups or nursery schools and classes (3). For example, one mother said that she had never lived in

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[3] Halsey, A. H. and Smith, T., op. cit. (1978). This Birmingham study reported that the vast majority of children attended nursery units within a half mile radius. Half come from the first ¼ mile radius, half from the second ¼ mile and an average of 98% come from within a mile.

[4] Halsey, A. H. and Smith, T., op. cit. (1978). In the two areas of Birmingham studied the extent of unmet demand was as follows. In a suburb of the city of 116 three and four year old children, 28 did not attend any pre-school facility but 14 wanted places. In a densely populated inner city redevelopment area of 181 three and four year olds, 37 did not attend any pre-school facilities but 26 were seeking places.

Bradley, M. and Kucharski, R., op. cit. (1977). In the five areas of Liverpool described in this study there was considerable variation in the level of usage relative to the extent of provision. For example, in Norris Green where there was "quite a large number of pre-school provisions for a relatively small population of pre-school children", only half of the 336 children above the age of 2½ years were attending some form of provision. In Belle Vale 21, in Toxteth 58 and in Everton 34 children were not attending any form of provision.

[5] The characteristics of the areas are described in Appendix I.

one place long enough and another could not manage her full-time job and to take her child anywhere. One Chinese lady did not know anything about pre-school facilities and therefore had no plans to take her child. The other 52% of the mothers (11) said that they did not want pre-school facilities. In some cases this meant that they did not want the type of facility that was available to them.

> "I prefer the things that are just one morning a week or something and it's more or less just them meeting their friends and that . . . I think with coming to the playgroup if you go the one morning, they're expecting you to go all the time because you take it in turns as well, so they'd maybe be thinking you were doing that to slip your turn in helping to look after them. So I never bothered with it."

Two mothers did not seem to have any particular reason for not taking their child to a playgroup or nursery unit. The rest (9) said that they thought it was better for the children or they preferred the children to stay at home with them. It is interesting to compare the following two statements. In the first the mother is expressing rather negative reasons for not taking her child whereas in the second two mothers are suggesting positive advantages gained from not attending any pre-school facility.

> "Many's the time I've felt like that (sending him to a nursery). When the washing is piled up, as it usually does, and you feel as if you need it. The children are under your feet. I've never actually done it. No. I can put up with the house and children. There's always another day."

> "She has everything she wants here to play with, the same things as they do at the playgroup, she does here with Katherine and everybody. I mean, she's got the twins, she plays with water, she plays with dough, she writes, she does everything that she wants, so she doesn't need it. And she can talk, she can hold a conversation with you better than any other child of her age. I think she spends that much time with grown-ups that she is forward for her age."

> "I think it's (nursery class) all action, you know. I associate it very much with noise and the people who take the class have to discipline them in some sort of way. I think the peace and quiet of a home situation is probably more beneficial because the world is so noisy . . . I want him to be self-sufficient. I think that's the most important thing I could teach him. To be content and self-sufficient. I've noticed with other children (who go to nursery units and playgroups) that a lot of them are very unable to amuse themselves and are

discontented and bored and wanting to be active all the time."

'Non-users' in the disadvantaged area

In order to examine the characteristics of positive and negative non-users we studied the area in the city which had reputedly the most severe shortage of pre-school facilities.[6] It is a disadvantaged area in terms of housing and employment. There is a high rate of mobility into and out of the area. The two adjacent primary school catchment areas studied had 3 nursery units, 3 playgroups and a day nursery situated in them. There are also playgroups and nursery units situated immediately outside the area. One of the nursery units offers full-day places (40), which were all full at the time of the study, and for this reason has the longest waiting list of any nursery unit in the area (38). The waiting list included children living outside the primary school catchment area. A second nursery unit has 15 full-day places which were all taken and 25 part-day places which were not all taken. Similarly, the third unit offered 50 part-day places and had vacancies. The nursery unit staff reported that priority was given to children on medical and social work recommendations but this was not particularly a problem in that there was not a tremendous pressure for places except full-day places.

However, there was a pressure for places at the day nursery. This had 60 children and 20 children were placed with Daycarers attached to the day nursery. There were 22 children on the waiting list.

Mothers of 26 non-users living in the area specified, were interviewed.[7] 12 were non-users in the sense already used, namely not having used and not intending to use pre-school facilities. (14 were drop-outs and they are discussed in the next section.) They gave a similar range of reasons for their non-use of facilities as mothers in other areas. For example, 4 mothers said that they "didn't believe in nurseries" or that they thought that their child was better off at home, and 4 mothers expressed the view that they could do as much for their child at home. However, an attitude not previously encountered was that of 4 mothers who said that their child did not need to go as though it was only necessary when the mother had failed in some way. The following quotation provides an example of this attitude.

"Some bairns need a nursery. Some bairns are backward and it helps to bring them oot a bit. But no'for me."

[6] According to a Social Work Department representative the day nursery in this area had the longest waiting list of any except one. The latter was situated in Wester Hailes where a new children's centre was shortly to be opened.

[7] The methodology of the study is described in Appendix III. Non-users (including drop-outs) represent 14% of the children aged three to five believed to be resident in the area at the time. Irregular attenders are another 5%.

Half of the non-users said that one reason for not taking their children anywhere was that they enjoyed their company at home and would be lonely without them, even though in some cases they recognised that it might benefit the child to go. For example, 67% of these mothers said that their children did not have other children's company enough and 50% said that their children had nowhere out-of-doors to play.[8]

> "I'm no thinking of her. I'm thinking of me on my own. That's probably why I'd no take her to nursery 'cause I'd be left on my own."

The other mothers who thought it might be good for the child to go (4), had not applied because they 'had not got round to it' or did not think that they would get a place.

Only one mother gave a lack of knowledge about facilities as a reason for not taking her child to any pre-school facility.

> "I don't know what each do and I'm no' the kind of person who's going to go up and ask — I feel silly."

However, the non-users as a whole did tend to have the least information about the different kinds of places when they were compared with people who had experience of taking their children somewhere or who had their children's name on a waiting list.

'Drop-outs' and irregular users in the disadvantaged area

In addition to mothers who had never taken their children to any pre-school facility and did not have any intention of doing so, 14 children were 'drop-outs', or, in other words they had previously attended a facility. Most had recently attended a nursery unit. A few had gone to playgroup. None of them were drop-outs from day nurseries. Further, 9 mothers of children identified as irregular users of facilities were interviewed. The distinction between drop-outs and irregular users is blurred because mothers may not take their children to facilities for a considerable period but eventually go back.

The reasons that the mothers of drop-outs and irregular attenders gave for originally wanting pre-school places were the same as those given by other mothers, namely giving their children the opportunity to mix with other children, and it being a preparation for school. Similarly, they mentioned that it provided them with a break from their children's company, or, in some cases, a break from the demands made by the children on the mothers' already overstretched resources. This was more common in this area than in the others studied because there were many more mothers with multiple

[8] Not enough company of other children — non-users 67%, drop-outs 57%, irregular attenders 44% and waiting lists 78%. Nowhere to play — non-users 50%, drop-outs 14%, irregular attenders 33% and waiting lists 61%.

problems. There was a larger proportion of single parents,[9] and of families with three children under the age of five years,[10] and of families with severe financial problems.[11] However, as we shall see, this was often a reason for keeping the child at home as much as a reason for needing to have a break from them.

Most of the drop-outs attended the facility for only a very short period. Eleven mothers said that it was just for 'a few weeks' and some for as little as a week. Since they had made the initial effort to take their children, it is interesting to consider why it did not suit them after all. 9 mothers said that one reason for not continuing to take their children was that the children did not like it or did not settle down. In view of the short period that they attended this seems to indicate a lack of commitment to the idea rather than the reason for not taking them any more. They perhaps paid more attention to the children's own statements than would generally be expected with children of pre-school age. The interviewers felt that the attitude that the children could decide for themselves was quite noticeable. This attitude is suggested by such comments as the following.

> "It was really up to him, because he didnae like it. I wouldn't force him to go to the toy school, like. I don't work or anything so I wasn'ae fussy if he went to toy school or not."
>
> "I don't know. He'd be crying in the morning. Some mornings he would, not every morning, but some mornings he would act up. Well, I wouldn'ae force him to go. I wasn'ae going to say 'right, you're going', you know. I've got other things to do. If he didn'ae want to go, that was it. 'Cause, you know, he knew it was a nursery school and he knows he's not at regular school yet, and he knows he's going."
>
> "I think he's really missing something, you see, the other children about here go, well, most of them go to nursery. I think if he gave himself a chance he would settle in fine. He'd learn and just be like the other ones. You know, because it must be boring for him as well, just watching, they like the children's programmes in the morning on the television, he sits and watches that."

Whereas there were drop-outs from facilities in the more mixed social class areas that we studied, there were not so many and they tended to be younger children[12] who had not settled and whose mothers

[9] 28% were single parents compared with 7% in the mixed social class areas studied. Those within the area represented 3% of the children aged 0-5.

[10] 9% of the families had three children under five years old compared with less than 2% in the mixed social class areas studied.

[11] Severe financial problems were mentioned by 22% of the mothers.

[12] In this area 79% were over 4 years old and the other 21% were over three and a half years old.

intended to try again a little later. It is tempting to speculate that it was more likely that some of these children did not settle because of the disparity between home and nursery unit or playgroup.

Eight of the mothers said that they did not like having to take their children to the facility. One mother admitted that when the child did not settle after a couple of days, she took him away because she did not like having to stay at the nursery unit with him. In some cases it was very awkward for the mother. Some thought that the hours offered were not enough compensation for the inconvenience.

> "I'd have preferred it longer — it wasn'ae long enough. I mean, I was taking him and the wee lassie up to school and the nursery, coming away back doon again, going up again, coming doon again and then going away up for my wee lassie and back doon."

> "He was off quite a bit. It was the baby as well, and I've been having to take him up to nursery and bring him home, and with the baby being ill. She had whooping cough before Stuart did, so I'd to keep him off quite a bit 'cause I couldn't get up and back for him and they didn'ae let anybody else collect him. See, my niece goes to that school and she was willing to collect him, but they didn'ae let anybody under sixteen."

There were specific criticisms of the facilities and the staff. One mother did not like a teacher and another felt that her child had been unfairly treated by the person in charge of the facility. Some mothers would have preferred a different facility, sometimes the same and sometimes a different type from those that their children had attended. However, on the whole these were only minor factors in their children's non-attendance. Three out of four mothers who had been persuaded by their Health Visitor or Social Worker to take the child, and had now stopped said that they "didn't really believe in it" in the first place. The following quotation from an interview with a mother of seven children, illustrates the way in which the mother's reasoning can be completely at odds with that of the professional recommending a place.

> "The health visitor, in actual fact, thought it was a very good idea to get one of them out. It's just that the house was always so full and she said it would be good for them, and, especially with a new baby and everything, and it would give me a couple of hours to myself ... I didn't like to feel I was depriving him. I think if it's an only child they obviously need company, but, I mean, I have a sister who lives up the road, and she's three small children so they're in here an awful lot,

and they mix quite freely, and of course all my other children bring their friends in."

One of the factors that most clearly differentiated between mothers currently taking their child to playgroups or nursery units, and mothers making no attempt to take them, was in their attitude towards their children's company. 88% of non-users and drop-outs said that they enjoyed having their children at home with them and several clearly felt that they would be lost without them.

"I was used to, when they were all young, round about my feet and that. I suppose you get used to it. I mean, you put them in a nursery and you'll walk on doon the road. You didn'ae want to come into an empty hoose. They just went and you just felt as though you were leaving part of your life."

58% of this group, compared with 38%[13] of the infrequent users and waiting list mothers, said that they had no desire to have more time to themselves. They said that they would not know what to do with the time.

"I've got so much time at the moment and I don't have anything to do with it except playing with them and helping them to find out little things. I would miss all that if he went to nursery."

One mother who suffered from agoraphobia has not been out of the house for years and is very dependent on her children's company.

"I wouldn't know what to do with myself. We live in a sort of happily organised chaos. I wouldn't know what to do 'cause I don't know anybody . . . And, of course, at lunchtime they all bring their friends home, so we normally have about two dozen children here at lunchtime. So, it's quite good."

It seems as though these mothers felt that their only value was as a mother and that they needed their children to be dependent on them. This feeling is illustrated in the following quotation in which a mother who was widowed in her late twenties explains her feelings about her four children. Her son went to a day-nursery for a short while.

"When he was in the all-day nursery they were turning him into a little boy, independent, you know, so's he could go and wash his face, clean his own teeth, take his clothes off, you know, and things like that. Whereas, I've been selfish with Charles. I've tried to keep him as a baby, see, and I was doing all that for him. And I noticed when he was in the all-day

[13] The difference between the groups does not reach statistical significance.

unit, he was doing all these things himself and then, when he came home, he stopped doing it because he knew I would do it."

Several of this group of mothers mentioned their reluctance to give up their children to the educational system. An example follows.

"I think the bairns should be with the mother before they go to school anyway. They're at school long enough. I mean, when they do start school, they have to go, but they don't have to go to the nursery. Unless it's really necessary that the mother has to go out and work as well. But I mean, if it's no', like me if I'm in all the time and that, I dinn'ae have to take them — you can have them beside you."

The mothers of irregular attenders (9) had a more positive attitude towards using pre-school facilities than mothers of drop-outs. All except one mother said that it was good for the child to go to a nursery unit or playgroup. Five of them said that the child missed the nursery or playgroup when he did not go. The following examples suggest that it was not so much a positive decision on the part of the mother as a lack of making the necessary effort to take their children.

"I dinn'ae ken why I do it, 'cause the bairn likes going, ken what I mean, she likes going — but sometimes, likes if I'm no' well or she's got a cold or anything — I keep her off then — and she wants to go."

"He always says he wants to go back, ken, if anybody says to him, 'were you at toy school today?'. If he's been off, and he'll say, 'No, I've never been, my Mum wouldn'ae get up out of her bed.' He does miss it. He likes the singing and meeting people, I think."

The child's illness was a common reason given for keeping children at home (5). Although for some mothers, it seemed to be an excuse when they did not want to take their child. One mother was not happy taking her child to a nursery unit. She felt the hours were too short. and that the staff were against her and were not interested in the child, so she often kept him at home.

"He's been off quite a lot. He's been ill and he plays with my neighbour's kids and they've been off. And I've kept him off instead of letting it spread in the toy school, you know."

However, another reason given related to the rather inflexible nature of existing provision, namely, the need to arrive within a particular range of times. One mother said she felt guilty about not being able to take the child to Nursery on time. She finds the child difficult to cope

with, has considerable financial difficulties, and is a very nervous and withdrawn person so cannot face the staff if she is late.

> "To tell you the truth, I mean, sometimes I sleep in and that, well, I dinn'ae like taking him late, ken, if he's no' there at the (right) time."

Children on waiting lists in the disadvantaged area

Mothers of 7 children on nursery unit waiting lists, and 16 mothers of children on day nursery waiting lists were asked about their reasons for application and what it meant to them to have to wait.[14] 6 out of 7 mothers on nursery unit waiting lists said that they wanted full-day places. 14 of the mothers on the day nursery waiting list said that they wanted places for their children so that they could work. Many could not cope financially without working, and as the following quotation illustrates, found themselves in a steadily worsening situation.

> "Well, I'm really desperate for a job — with my bills. The bills just now, I'm having an awful lot of bother with, the electricity bill and the gas bill, and I cann'ae pay either of them."

Although they may not actually be in debt, the chance to get a job is seen by some mothers as a way to improve a generally depressing home situation and increase their own self-respect.

> "I find it very difficult to live off social security and because you've no independence, you can't do anything without social security . . . I want to be independent. I don't want to have to rely on them, on a book, all my life, you know, so I prefer to be independent and have my own money and know that I'm contributing, like, keeping myself."

Several mothers wanted to get a job for the chance to meet people and to get away from the routine of every day at home with children, particularly if they found their children difficult to cope with, as well as because of the financial advantages in working. 10 mothers with children on the day nursery waiting list were single parents.[15] Some of these mothers, trying to cope alone, mentioned feeling very depressed or even 'desperate' as in the following quotation.

> "He (child) drives me crazy. I've got to get him oot or, oh, I'll end up killin' him."

A striking difference between non-users and mothers with children

[14] Ten of the mothers interviewed with children on the waiting list of the day nursery lived outside the area defined. Only mothers of children old enough to attend a nursery unit and on the waiting list were contacted.

[15] They were single parents at the time they applied although some had since married.

currently on a waiting list was that, whereas 55% of mothers in the latter category said that they found it difficult to cope with their children, only 19% of non-users or drop-outs said that they had problems in this respect.[16] An extreme case is described by a mother who continually referred to her three-year-old as a 'holy terrier'.

> "My mother's not fit to look after him because she's half crippled as it is, and he takes bits oot o' her and everything. We leather him wi' a slipper and he still does it o'er again no matter what you dae."

Such descriptions as 'overactive' and 'hyperactive' were common in the case of children on waiting lists.

> "She's meant to be one of these hyperactive kids. She fell out of the window, at the other house, onto the concrete ... There's nothing mentally wrong with her. They just found she was really active, really overactive. I can't cope with her. I just can't. She just likes to go and go all the time."

Whereas most mothers with children on waiting lists at nursery units had only waited for a few months,[17] most of those with children on the day nursery waiting list had already waited for six months to a year. In some cases, the situation had improved during this time; for example, some single parents had married. Some had forgotten about their application in this time and were planning to take their children elsewhere. The situation of others had deteriorated. The children of two of the mothers interviewed had been put into foster care. A single mother with a child eighteen months old said that she felt that if she had been given a place twelve months ago everything would have been all right but since then her family had not been able to give her financial assistance and she had accumulated considerable debts.

> "I'm really getting quite annoyed about it really. I mean, I didn't know it would take her (child) so long (to get a place). I was quite amazed one day and I phoned up. I told her (officer in charge) that I'd heard that if anybody needed to get their child into the nursery fast like, then they got it automatically, but she tried to tell me that wasn'ae so."

Consequently she could not afford to go out, was depressed and found it difficult to cope with the child.

Some mothers expressed resentment at the system which kept them waiting for a day nursery place whilst others had them. Two examples follow.

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[16] Chi Sq = 8.86. P is less than 1%.

[17] 57% had been on nursery unit waiting list for 3 months or less and the other 43% had been on the list from three to nine months.

"Some days you feel so, you know, they're driving you round the twist, and you've to wait and wait and wait. You feel like you should go and batter the kids and then take them up and get a place. That's true, though, if I went up drunk or something, they'd soon take them in."

"I mean, it's just like being a one-parent family. I dinn'ae see what right I couldn'ae get him in and other people can get them in and go out and work. The only reason I never got him in is because I'm living with somebody else. I mean, it's stupid, really, and we didn'ae get family income supplement or nothing like that."

Half of the mothers who had applied for a place at the day nursery did so themselves either from their own initiative, or because a friend or relative had recommended it. The others had been advised to apply by either a health visitor, social worker or family doctor for reasons connected with the mothers' or the children's health. However, it is interesting to note that, over the sample of children in this area as a whole, such professionals tended to encourage mothers to apply to nursery units or playgroups rather than the day nursery, and in some cases discouraged mothers from applying for a day nursery place. All of the mothers on waiting lists for places at nursery units had been encouraged to apply by a social worker, health visitor or, in one case, an educational home visitor.[18] In many cases the reasoning was probably that it would be good for the child and the mother to have a break from each other. In an area where few gates close properly, where dogs roam the streets and where the roads carry a great deal of traffic, caring for under fives is a very demanding task. When you add to this the fact that mothers tended to have a lot of children, very little money, and a lack of places to take them and the fact that many of them had considerable other pressures on them — financial, personal, health and so on — it is perhaps a credit to them that any of them make the effort to take their children to playgroups and nursery units. Although most mothers did not stay with their children, the advantages gained from being given a break from the children were decreased by the disadvantages connected with taking them and collecting them with such a short period in between. Not only is it more difficult for mothers with a few young children but they also do not gain the same benefit as mothers with only one or two children.

43% of the mothers interviewed said that their children had nowhere to play, 14% said that they could play in the street or on the

[18] Lothian region has a scheme whereby certain children are visited regularly in their homes by an Educational Home Visitor who tries to get the mother interested in playing with the child and in watching their child's development. Once the visits stop the child is more or less guaranteed a place in the nursery unit to which the home visitor is attached.

balconies of their flats and another 9% said that the children had nowhere to play unless they were accompanied. Apart from visits to the shops a great deal of the day is spent in the house, watching the television or doing housework. Although 24% mentioned visiting relatives or friends often this was because the child would have somewhere out-of-doors to play during the visit which was something they did not have at home.

In this area there were two extreme reactions to multiple problems. Either the mothers could just keep all their children at home or, particularly if they had fewer children and if their financial problems were uppermost, they could attempt to have their child looked after for the whole day whilst they worked. The facilities that currently exist are the same as those which serve other less disadvantaged areas of the city, but here they lead to a situation in which there is too much demand for full-day care and vacancies in part-day nursery units and playgroups. The lack of suitability of either leaves many in between, namely mothers who feel unable to be separated from their young children, mothers who do not have a sufficiently routinised life to be able to fit in with the requirements of such facilities, and mothers whose other problems require their more immediate attention. An example of the latter is a mother of three under fives who has had no electricity in the house for a year because she cannot pay the £200 bill. She does not wish to be separated from her children.

> "I prefer to have them with me all the time than to have them away because, I think, the more relationship they have with their mother, the better the children."

However, meeting their basic physical requirements is a considerable task.

> "This wee one's coming up to baby foods, you know, she's needing solids and I can't give her it because I've nothing to heat it up on. Fair enough, if I tried I could heat it up on the fire, but if you don't have a lid on it gets full of smoke. It's terrible on a Tuesday 'cause the chip shop's closed on a Tuesday, so we just make do with what we can."

She did try to take her eldest child to a playgroup but found that she could not manage to take all three children there, and back, twice.

7

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

More nursery schools and classes are generally considered to be desirable. The part of this study which took place in Edinburgh shows, to some extent, what begins to happen when there is an adequate level of such provision. First, it is possible for the facility to admit more children to attend for two sessions each day. Some children therefore attend for longer periods of time. Secondly, when there is no shortage of nursery unit places, questions of priority become largely irrelevant, and, when all the four-year-olds have places, children can be admitted as soon as they are three years old. Some children therefore attend nursery units for two years before they start primary school. Thirdly, if there is no shortage of places nursery units will admit any children of the relevant age and will sometimes advertise to keep sufficient numbers of children. This means that, increasingly, pressure is put on mothers to take their children. Mothers interviewed in this study often said that they took their child to a pre-school facility because all the children living nearby went and if their children did not go they would have nobody to play with and would be the odd ones out. This is the immediate effect. However, a longer term effect is that their children may be missing something by not attending. They may be missing the opportunity of learning to mix with other children, being separated from their mothers, being able to cope with being told what to do by other adults, being accustomed to a routine, and so on. A danger is that whereas, before nursery schools and classes existed in significant numbers, the primary school teachers would not expect children coming to school to be used to being away from mother and coping with a classroom situation, they must now be increasingly taking these things for granted. With universal nursery education the child with a parent who does not send her may really be putting the child at a disadvantage simply because she has not been moulded in the way that the teacher now expects.

Of course, the child who does not attend a nursery unit may also be missing something in that it is intended to be a learning experience. This brings us to the problem of the content of nursery education. A finding of this study was that mothers of older children, or children

who had attended a nursery unit for more than a year, were often concerned about their children becoming bored with it. This is even more likely to happen if more children attend for two sessions per day. The view was often expressed that the older children should be given some more formal instruction.

> "If you're prepared to go to the bother of trailing your kid to nursery, then I think you ought to get what they need . . . reading, or anything the child seems to want to do. I think at four-and-a-half to five there's just not enough scope for them, in fact, they're entirely frustrated. They've played with sand and they've done with water, and anyway they can mostly do that at home. It's really socialising they go for and, I think, at four-and-a-half they really want to start to do something more."

And it was suggested that there should not be such a rigid division between nursery and primary classes.

> "It's a lot to ask of a teacher to cope with three- and five-year-olds. The five-year-olds, not all of them, but some of them distinctly want to be doing something like counting, doing something on a counting frame or they want to be writing. I would like to see more of an interaction between the Infant, Primary I and nursery as I think it has some influence. Some of the primary I's could perhaps come to the nursery if things were getting a bit heavy for them, you know, for part of the day. Perhaps the older ones, you know, 4½ and 5 year olds could sit in with the Primary I for maybe storytime, or doing the things that they do, you know, some painting. You find that they do it in a more disciplined way than a lot of four-and-a-half, five-year-olds are very ready for, you know. I would like to see more swapping and less of a division between nursery and Primary I."

However, nursery education is not compulsory. Parents of primary school age children have to ensure that their children go to school but parents of pre-school children do not have to bother to take and collect their children to nursery schools and classes. This would not matter were it not for the fact that it has always been hoped that nursery education would have compensatory qualities. Even where nursery units are placed in disadvantaged areas middle class children from nearby catchment areas attend and mothers of the more needy children are often those who do not make the effort to take them. Thus, as our study of a disadvantaged area showed, the children can become doubly disadvantaged in a situation where the majority of children are experiencing some form of pre-school education. Probably from the point of view of these children, the best thing

would be for nursery education to be compulsory. In the present financial climate, apart from the ideological climate, this seems hardly likely to happen.

Ideological climate is mentioned because one of the striking features of our present day culture is its child-oriented nature. It is hardly necessary to make this statement in this the International Year of the Child. Thus, over half the mothers that we talked to believed that their place was at home with their pre-school children, despite the fact that they had given up careers, free time and many other things to bring this about. Many went to considerable personal inconvenience to take their children to pre-school groups because it was believed to be to the child's advantage to go. A sizeable minority were not willing to do this, and carried on with their careers but some, particularly those who had to work for financial reasons, felt guilty and worried about the fact that they were not following the currently accepted pattern.

Nursery schools and classes are not the answer to their child care problems for parents who need or wish to work full-time. In fact, in some cases the children do not get nursery unit experience because their mothers work full-time and the unit's hours are not long enough. Even part-time working mothers may find the session times inappropriate. Of course, nursery units are not designed for this purpose and, apart from isolated exceptions[1], this has not generally been thought to be important. On the contrary, the usual ideological position is that parents should be actively involved in the activities of the nursery units as well as the pre-school playgroups which their children attend. The actual parental involvement with nursery units was found in this study, in line with others, to be minimal. The majority of mothers were pleased to be relieved of the company of their children for a short while and were glad to hand them over to trained personnel. They did not feel pressure to stay at the unit; on the contrary, they sometimes felt unwelcome, and since they were satisfied with the facility did not generally feel moved to lend a hand with administrative matters. This was seen as largely in the hands of the local authority anyway. The arguments put forward on all sides were that it was good for mothers to have a break from their children,

[1] Totten, E., 'Extended day nursery', *Times Educational Supplement*, 14th Feb. 1975, describes extended day scheme in a nursery school.
Association Of County Councils: *Under Fives*, London, 1977, p26. "Preliminary arrangements have been made in Lambeth in co-operation with two local nursery schools whereby children will be looked after after school hours at one of Lambeth's day centres. This idea is to be extended and in Islington projects were started in September, 1976 under which the borough have funded extended day care for nursery pupils at two primary schools with nursery classes where it is felt that the needs of working mothers merit such provision and will lead to more children in need of nursery education being admitted to classes."

particularly if they had younger children to care for, and it was good for the children to mix with others of the same age. Nursery schools and classes, in general, have little to offer mothers themselves except a little freedom, if it can be called that — in view of the fact that most of them spent this time doing housework or shopping.

Although pre-school playgroups initially came into being as an alternative for children who did not have access to a nursery school or class, they are now preferred by some mothers. They offer the mother more. There is more parental involvement with playgroups than with education authority provision although our study found many more parents who would rather not be involved than those who would. However, they have a certain attractive informality and friendliness which led some mothers to prefer them to other types of provision.

> "At the playgroup, all the mothers gathered in the morning and would stand and blether for half an hour and then go home. I miss that, I miss not talking to the other mothers. At the nursery where the children are, there's only a third of the children at one time and you only meet the odd mother going in and out. We don't stand and chat in a group like we used to."

There is a danger that, if free nursery education is available for everyone for whom it is practicable, playgroups will find it difficult to survive in urban areas. To date, only in isolated cases has the increase in nursery education facilities led to the closing of playgroups, but there are some examples and more could be expected.

> "In East Lothian there is a pattern of playgroups reducing particularly where nursery schools have opened up in the past three years and a subsequent emphasis on mother-and-toddler groups."[2]

More generally the characteristics of playgroup entrants are changed. Playgroups become a facility for younger children. Many parents, who have access to both types of facilities, have, or plan to take their children to a nursery unit for the year before they start school and to a playgroup for the year before that. Private playgroups are less affected by this movement. Often this would seem to be because the groups are believed to offer something special. In some cases, they specially prepare children for entrance examinations for independent or grant-aided schools.

Playgroups are likely to remain the most suitable facility for rural areas because of the shortage of children in any one primary school catchment area and the impracticability of taking pre-school children

[2] Quotation from a questionnaire completed by a representative of East Lothian Social Work Department.

much further than about a mile. In fact, even now, pre-school groups in villages are often playgroups and mother-and-toddler groups[3] combined so as to keep sufficient numbers to make the group worthwhile. An example is Highland region where a Social Work Department representative said the following.

> "Some playgroups have no lower age limit due to the nature of rural population."

Playgroups and mother-and-toddler groups provide an opportunity for mothers to talk to each other and to escape the isolation of their own homes. Many mothers in all the areas we studied said that they did not see enough people to talk to during the day and did not get out without their children as much as they would like to.[4]

> "I sit and talk to myself most of the time or watch the telly, through boredom."

> "This is the trouble. I don't see, I don't really know anybody. Nobody at all. As I say, I lived in a village before."

> "I normally take them with me — mind you. It's nice to get out on your own, to get on a bus with no buggy or toddler to carry on a bus with you. Likes on a Saturday, I enjoy going out to work. I just go on my own. If I didn't work on a Saturday, I'd want to get away."

There are mother-and-toddler groups all over Scotland. As there are no legal requirements for such groups to register with their Social Work Departments in the way that there are for playgroups, only a few regions could supply us with information about their numbers. Those that did are Fife with 47, Central with 27, Tayside with 15 and East Lothian with 17. The latter pointed out that the numbers of mother-and-toddler groups are increasing. Let us consider them for a moment.

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[3] Mother-and-toddler groups provide an opportunity for mothers with young children to meet together whilst their children play for a few hours a week. Mothers have to stay with their children and usually run the group themselves.

[4] In the city centre area 18% of the mothers said that they did not see enough people to talk to during the day, 24% in the outskirts area and 27% in the rural area said the same thing. 19% of the rural sample lived in houses in which it is more than one mile to the nearest house except for next door in the case of semi-detached houses (5%). The percentages of children who did not have many pre-school children living nearby are 22% in the city centre, 25% in the outskirts area and 38% in the rural area.
28% said that they did not get out without their children as much as they would like in the daytime and 28% said they did not get out as much as they would like in the evening.
In our disadvantaged area 27% of the respondents who were not currently using pre-school provision said that they did not have any relatives living in the area and 42% said that they had no friends living in the area. A situation no doubt exacerbated by the high rate of mobility in the area.

Our evidence suggests that in Lothian Region they are a middle-class phenomenon.[5] They are intended for the mother as much as the child. It is a formalised way of letting children and mothers get together. Some mothers described their less formal arrangements for such getting together and for such child caring. One suspects that an attraction of a mother-and-toddler group which meets in hired premises is the relaxation gained from not having to watch that one's own furnishings and fittings will recover from the onslaught (just as it is becoming increasingly popular to hire facilities for children's parties).

> "They (mothers) just sort of sit around and chat amongst themselves. So, from that point of view it's quite nice, because it gives us a chance to sort of talk to each other. Because, I find, sometimes if he (child) has a friend here, so much depends on the kind of mood they're in. You know, they can be quite obstreperous sometimes back home and you find that you spend half the afternoon sorting out the battles whereas there, you know, you can sort of sit back."

Apart from certain special groups, for example, mother-and-toddler groups for handicapped children, they do not appear to be being attended by mothers and children who need them the most. Mothers living in the disadvantaged area in which we carried out our study of people not currently using other types of pre-school facilities, were unlikely to go to a mother-and-toddler group.

Mothers such as these with multiple problems need some kind of flexible provision where they can take their children whenever they can manage it, and where they can leave the children if necessary, or stay and be given some personal help, if this is what they require. They need a facility in which children of any age are welcome and in which the children do not have to present a particular kind of appearance, or be required, for example, to be potty trained. It is not the building but the atmosphere and attitudes of the staff freed from the more usual and formal administrative restrictions of such facilities, which is important. If Children's Centres can manage this then this form of joint Social Work and Education Department[6] provision may be an answer for the future for such areas. However a grave danger is that rather than flexibility being gained, it will be lost by the one central institution pushing out the multiplicity and variety of existing provision.

Our data suggests that mothers currently using local authority day nursery provision are generally satisfied with it. The main criticisms came from mothers who would have preferred to have been looking

[5] When manual and non-manual attenders are compared Chi Sq = 24.25. P is less than 0.2%.

[6] TUC working party report: *The [illegible]der-fives*, London, 1976.

after their children themselves. Day nurseries appear to be the most flexible type of provision of any that mothers in Lothian region were using because they were open for the longest hours and allowed mothers considerable leeway in terms of when to leave and collect their children. There is little parental involvement but this in most cases would not be realistic in view of their reasons for being given priority placements. Perhaps the main comment to be made here is that there is not enough of this type of provision for those who need it. In addition, some who need it do not want it and some who would like it cannot have it. Let us examine the characteristics of such groups.

Unless some children are to become doubly disadvantaged it is important either that such facilities provide educational experiences of the same standards as those provided by nursery schools, or that arrangements are made for children to go to nursery schools and classes for part of the day. Problems associated with travelling between day nurseries and nursery units have, in Lothian region, led to experiments with nursery teachers in day nurseries. However, the more attractive day nurseries become, the more likely mothers are to want to send their children. In particular, mothers who wish to work will become increasingly dissatisfied with a situation where they would be eligible for a place if they were a single parent or an alcoholic, or if they had got themselves into a great deal of debt, but not because they wish to work. An improved childminding service might be part of this answer but major improvements, from the mothers' point of view, would seem to require changing this service to such an extent that it would be almost unrecognisable. It is the very advantages of the childminder that make it disadvantageous to the mother and child. Namely, it is the fact that the childminder can look after her own family at the same time as earning some money that often makes her offer that service for the few years before her own children go to school. However, the fact that the minder has her own family to look after, is in her own home, and is probably only interested in the occupation for a few years, has disadvantages for the mother and child.[7] For example, if training was compulsory and if the minding was carried out outside the minder's home, the mothers might prefer it, but the people minding at present would probably not continue.

The people using day nursery provision although not really wanting it are mothers who have to work for financial reasons. There are often arguments advanced about payments being made to mothers for staying at home to look after their children. In terms of the general population this seems unrealistic but financial assistance ought to be such that unmarried, single, widowed, separated and

[7] Mayall and Petrie: op. cit.

divorced parents can manage not to go out to work if this is what they want. It may be that such people would more often choose to stay at home with their children but many may, in fact, prefer the contact with others which going out to a job provides rather than the lonely self-sufficiency of staying at home with a child.

On the other hand, many mothers felt that there was unwelcome pressure on them to make them work. The first example below from a married woman living in our city centre area suggests financial pressure and the second suggests the pressure of public opinion.

> "I don't know anybody that does not work, that can afford to be a full-time mother, housekeeper whatever. Really, that's true. I don't know anybody at all that doesn't work. A few years back none of us worked. Occasionally, we'd maybe have a wee part-time job at night. You know, it would last for two months until we got fed up with it. It was just a case of getting out. But now, it really is sheer necessity. Well, not sheer necessity, I mean, to be able to try and live how you used to I think that's how bad it is."

> "I think these days women are led to believe they're cabbages when they're at home. You know, even working in a fish factory is better than working at home, which is quite ridiculous really, 'cause, I mean, one can find more to interest oneself at home than in a fish factory ... You're made to feel that — 'Are you doing anything?', you know, 'Oh no, I'm just a housewife.' I think there's an awful pressure on housewives now."

I think the latter is felt by a minority and suggest that many more of the mothers who work out of necessity would go happily to work if the attitudes of the general public were not so firmly set in the view that young children suffer if their mothers are not with them all the time. It would seem that there is no evidence for this anyway.[8] Of course, many mothers want to stay at home because they enjoy spending time with their children. This was carried to the extreme by some mothers living in the disadvantaged area we studied who seem to be incapable of managing without their children's company even for the short period whilst they attend a playgroup or a nursery school.

Mothers who do stay at home for the child-rearing years, in the present employment situation, often are making a personal sacrifice in career terms although they may not be aware of it when they stop work. They should be made aware of it. Is it right that our society educates and trains men and women to expect the same things of life

[8] Smith, P., 'How many people can a young child feel secure with?', *New Society*, *31st May 1979*.

and then expects women to give them up if they become pregnant?[9] We can only offer the usual answers, namely re-training opportunities and an emphasis on the re-employment of older married women.

The argument is often advanced that women do not want to work but, as is argued in the case of parental involvement in playgroups, they may not know what they want until they try it. Our results suggest that most women do now see child-rearing as a transitional phase in which it is necessary for them to devote most of their time and attention to their children, and then return to some kind of employment. If adequate facilities were provided and mothers believed that their children were not suffering and might be actually gaining, and if they had not had a break from employment in which they lost their confidence in their ability, even if not that ability, how many would seize the opportunity of carrying on? Comparisons with other countries[10] suggest that where facilities for the children of working mothers exist more mothers work. However, they are state facilities. A dependence on public demand creating a need for private provision has resulted in the childminding service and expensive private nurseries. Alternatively, a need for labour encourages employers to provide their workers with facilities. The growth in the demand for full-day care continues invincibly but it is still from a minority of mothers of under-fives. It would require a great deal of pressure to get the necessary political decisions made at the national level for any state systems to be instituted.

There is, however, a demand from the majority for nursery education and playgroup facilities. It is difficult to think beyond what exists at present. As was mentioned earlier in this report, the only mothers who talked about any facilities different from the ones that exist in Scotland at present were those who had lived in another country. Similarly, when asked about the hours of attendance and so on most mothers' immediate response was to say that the hours suited them because they accepted them as fact and had fit their lives around them. Only one mother of [illegible]d looked after by a childminder mentioned Saturday atte[illegible]nd yet why should children not be able to go to a pre-schoo[illegible]nity on a Saturday?

> "They (childminders) dinnae watch kids on a Saturday. To me, it's stupid really because a lot of people do work on a Saturday, so what do they do with their kids on a Saturday. I'm lucky because I am staying with my Mum and Dad, but what do the people who've no' got their Mum and Dad

[9] Mackay, A., Wilding, P. and George, V., *Stereotypes Of Male And Female Roles And Their Influence On People's Attitudes To One Parent Families*, 79-92.

[10] Examples are Denmark, Belgium and Sweden according to figures quoted in the TUC working party report, op. cit.

staying with them do? Dump them on a neighbour or something? You know, I think that's stupid."

This was a study of parental demand as expressed in a particular situation. What people said they wanted was bounded by what they knew about, which in turn was related to what exist in the locality of their homes. It was when something gave people a special need or a need for special facilities[11] that they were likely to question the adequacy of what currently existed.

In the area where at first there seemed in some ways to be the least demand, in fact there was the most demand. Let me explain. In the mixed social class areas studied there was a great deal of demand in terms of the percentage of children actually using pre-school facilities. This demand was broadly speaking satisfied. Certain problems arose in the rural areas because of a shortage of nursery education and, less frequently, playgroup facilities, nearby. However, in the disadvantaged area studied although there were more non-users there was actually more demand. However, the demand was for full-day places rather than part-day sessions in nursery units and playgroups. All the facilities reported considerable pressure on their full-day places and the day nursery had people, whom they had defined as priority cases, on the waiting list for a year and more. Many mothers did not consider it to be worth the effort of taking their children to a facility for a short session, partly because of other difficulties such as finance and younger children, but also because of their particular attitude towards their pre-school children. These were not the kind of mothers who worried about whether they were buying the most educational toys, disciplining their children correctly, following the correct procedures in potty training, or sending them to the best playgroup. They were the kind of mothers who said that if their child did not want to go to playgroup there was nothing that they could do about it, who let their children play around until the afternoon without getting dressed, and who said that they did not like being parted from their under-fives even though they played outside out of the mother's sight all day long. The feeling of powerlessness over their children's actions and the degree of tolerance of them is amusingly illustrated by the example of a mother whose young boy frequently hails taxis.

"What he likes most is sitting in taxis. He keeps signalling for taxis and when the taxi man stops, and you've got to get in the taxi. That's one problem I've got with money is him

[11] In the mixed social class areas studied there were 4 children with some kind of mental handicap, 6 with some physical handicap and 7 with a medical condition which gave them special requirements. They represent less than 3% of the sample. In addition, 24 (4%) children came from families in which some other member of the family had some illness or handicap and this required special attention.

stopping taxis because he does that a lot when we go out. And when he sees me dressed up and at the bus stop waiting for a bus, well, he'll put his hand out and waves for a taxi and the taxi driver thinks I'm wanting it. So I get in it, I just get in it just the same for him 'cause I've got to keep him happy sometimes as well."

Some of these mothers then wanted full-day care and could not get it and some needed something that was not offered by existing facilities. However, they are the ones who are least likely to ask for any kind of facilities themselves. They are the ones who will need the most encouragement to use anything that is provided. They are also the ones who need a facility which is flexible to the extreme if it is to have some chance of fitting their various and varying needs.

Postscript

This study was planned at a time when vast expansion of nursery school and nursery class provision appeared to be underway. Thus, it was interesting to study areas in Edinburgh where there was already enough provision for all the three- to five-year-olds who wanted it — even if this would not have been the type of provision that their mothers would have ideally liked — as this gave a chance to see the extent to which people would be satisfied with the state of affairs the local authorities were working towards.

Now, in Autumn 1979, with everywhere discussion of cutbacks and closures in nursery education provision, the relevance of the overall finding that, in the present ideological climate, the majority of people are satisfied with educational provision as it currently exists, has been pushed forward into the future. However, a most important message for the present is that many of the children most likely to be in need of pre-school education understood in compensatory terms, are those that are the least likely to be getting it. If economies are made by cutting full-day places they will be even less likely to get it.

8

SUMMARY

There are different levels of pre-school provision in different parts of Scotland. There are not only differences between regions, but also between divisions and within divisions of each region. This is partly because of geographical and physical limitations but also because of different priorities and policies of the former authorities, and currently the regions, and the efficiency with which they have utilised money made available by central government.

In three geographically distinct socially mixed areas, within Lothian Region, namely city centre, outskirts of the city and rural, the pattern of usage was related to the kind of facilities that existed in the areas in which they lived. Most of the 3-5 year old age-group who did not attend a nursery unit or a day nursery went to a playgroup. Although 15% of the three- to five-year-olds in our sample were not currently using any pre-school facilities, most of them were likely to before they started primary school. Mothers of less than 4% did not intend taking them anywhere before they went to school.

Some people change between facilities if they are not satisfied with the one they are using, or if they think that something else would now suit their child better, and some localities have enough provision of different types to enable mothers to exercise this freedom of choice. In Scotland, in general, and in Lothian region, in particular, the people who are unlikely to have much choice about which pre-school provision to use are, first, those living in villages or in isolated houses; second, those living in the more 'disadvantaged', more highly populated, areas where there are large numbers of young families; and third, people, other than single parents or other priority cases, who require full-day care for their child.

It is obviously not possible for the physical and temporal aspects of pre-school facilities to suit every mother. In many cases, it seemed as though the mothers took the facility opening hours as a given and fit in other aspects of their lives around them. In city areas where there is a variety of provision mothers can, within limits, choose the type of facility which best meets their requirements. The group most satisfied with, for example, the hours were mothers who took their children to day nurseries. In these cases the long opening hours of the facility meant the greatest flexibility from the mothers' point of view.

An attempt to influence the pattern of demand by advertising facilities in a given locality led to the following conclusions. Most mothers with children the appropriate age to attend playgroups and nursery units know, at least, of their existence. It seems useful to think of it as a working knowledge of the system. That is, they either know enough about it, or know someone who knows enough about it to get their child in. At least, that is true of an area where there was no shortage of places in these types of facility. Therefore, telling people about facilities may give them more knowledge, but in the majority of cases it does not affect their actions. They do not take their children away from existing facilities and most of them still apply to the nearest facility.

The reason that most mothers in our sample gave for taking their child to a nursery unit or a playgroup was that the child would benefit from the experience. Those mentioned ranged from having the opportunity to play with other children of their own age, being in the company of their friends from the neighbourhood, taking them away from the home environment which they were now finding boring, to gaining educational stimulation, a preparation for school, and a training on being independent. The most common reason given for taking children to day-nurseries or day-carers was that the single parent had to work, and in some cases, study. The second major reason was some kind of stress situation as interpreted by the mother although it may have been seen more in terms of child development by the people allocating places. All the mothers of children with childminders were working or studying. The major criticisms of the activities in which the children engage at nursery units and playgroups related to a lack of direct teaching, a lack of structuring of activities, and a lack of variety. Mothers of children reaching primary school entrance age were more likely to make such comments than mothers of younger children. There is more movement out of playgroups than out of nursery units for non-practical reasons. This is to some extent because these facilities are seen as steps in a sequence of stages in children's pre-school careers. None of the mothers currently taking their children to a day nursery, daycarer or childminder said that they did not like the activities in which their children engaged whilst they were there. However, some mothers had taken their children away from daycarers or childminders.

The overall picture of the facilities attended by children in our sample is certainly not one of extensive parental participation, at any level, in the activities of the facility. A few playgroups actively encourage parents to attend sessions by having a rota of mother helpers and these account for the majority of cases of parental involvement. The reason most frequently given for not wishing to be

actually present at sessions was a lack of confidence in their own and other parents' abilities.

Those mothers that made their own arrangements to have their children looked after for some part of the day by a childminder did not express any concern about the effect on their children. However, mothers who had been provided with daycare places by the Social Work Department were much less likely to be satisfied. This may have been because they did not choose the particular daycarers themselves or because being separated from their children was forced upon them rather than their choosing to work. Mothers with free places in local authority day nursery were generally appreciative of advantages to themselves and their children. There was very little parental involvement in day nursery provision.

In order to contrast the characteristics of positive and negative non-users, non-users living in a 'disadvantaged' area were interviewed. The latter were found to be reluctant not to have the company of their children during the day, even though in some cases they recognised that it might benefit the child to go to a playgroup or nursery unit. They seemed to give more attention to the children's own statements than would generally be expected with children of pre-school age. Some did not like having to take their child to the facility and some were incapable of managing because their lives were not sufficiently routinised. In other cases, satisfying the basic physical needs of their children was as much as they could manage.

APPENDIX I

A

INTERVIEW STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF PROVISION ON PARENTAL DEMAND AND USAGE

Because demand for places can be expected to vary with their availability, geographically and temporally, and provision vary according to differing allocations of resources, policies and rates of childbirth, the main value of documenting existing demand and supply is that it contributes towards our understanding of the dynamic relationship between them. A study was therefore designed to examine the influence of provision on parental demand and utilisation and the relationship between these two.

What kind of pre-school facilities parents say they would like for children of particular ages and for what period of time is influenced by their perception of what alternatives exist both in general and in the area in which they live. This relationship is also complicated by the fact that what mothers say they would like to use is not always the same as what they actually use when they have the opportunity to do so. This may be because they are not aware that this opportunity exists[1] or it may be that the implications have not been seriously considered when statements about what they would like are made.

Because our interest, as stated, was in the dynamic relationship between the actual provision in a given locality and the preferences and usage by mothers in that locality, interviewing every mother with a pre-school child living in that locality was more appropriate than taking random samples of mothers as might researchers interested in demand per se. A primary school catchment area provided a convenient unit. An additional reason for selecting a

[1] A. Joseph, Under Five in Edinburgh, EPAG, Pamphlet 3, 1974, reports that some mothers did not try to get their children into corporation nurseries because they thought that the waiting lists were too long.

primary school catchment area was that the Plowden Report[2] suggested that nursery facilities should be located near primary schools and many nursery classes attached to primary schools already exist. If the primary school is within travelling distance of all this age group of children in the area, it is presumably theoretically within reach of mothers and their 3, 4 and 5 year olds.

TABLE 28

FACILITIES IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS STUDIED[1]

Area		*Facility*	*Number of places*
City centre	Stockbridge	Nursery class	60
		2 playgroups	48
		Day nursery	30
	London Street	Nursery class	50
		Playgroup[2]	20
		Private playgroup	12
Outskirts	Gracemount	Nursery class[3]	50
		Playgroup	25
Rural	Gifford	Nursery class	50
	Humbie	Playgroup	11
	Saltoun	Playgroup	14
	Dirleton	Playgroup	17
	Fala & Soutra	—	0
	Borthwick	—	0
	Temple	Playgroup	15
	Cousland	Playgroup	9
	Torphichen	Playgroup	20
	Bridgend	Playgroup	30

[1] Mother-and-toddler groups are not included.
[2] A second playgroup on the boundary between primary school catchment areas has 24 places.
[3] Many children from this area go to a nursery school with 150 places in the adjoining primary school catchment area.

Area of residence influences supply and demand. Localities differ in the amount and type of provision. There may be varying opportunities for women to work; differing problems with respect to travelling to work, taking children to pre-school facilities, and finding relatives and so on to look after children. To maximise these differences we studied three geographically distinct areas, namely a city centre area, an area on the outskirts of the city and several villages. The distinction was made in terms of the

[2] *Children and their Primary Schools*, a report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England), vol 1: report H.M.S.O. 1966.

availability of work for women in the immediate vicinity and the type of pre-school facilities provided in their primary school catchment area. In city centre areas, child care facilities are more concentrated and mothers can generally find full-time or part-time work without travelling very far. An outskirts area would be interesting in that mothers travelling to work in the city theoretically could choose between, or try to gain places in, facilities in either their home or their work area. Although in many rural areas there are no pre-school facilities at all we selected a village in which there was, unusually, a nursery class and several villages with playgroups so that the responses of mothers about what sort of facilities they would like would not be completely hypothetical. Their children could have experienced or be experiencing some form of pre-school education or care if desired. The available facilities in the area studied are listed in Table 28.

It was necessary to select socially mixed areas for study because we wanted to look at the influence of social class characteristics on the relationship between supply and demand.[3]

Methodology

Throughout the study a qualitative methodology was employed. That is, account was taken of the subjects' inner perspective or definitions of the situation as well as their outer perspective of the objective situation.

> "In order to predict behaviour, sociologists have to understand the complex processes that precipitate human interaction. To understand these complex processes, sociologists must obtain information relevant to the various attitudinal, situational and environmental factors that compose the real world for those under investigation."[4]

This 'action' approach emphasises that whether behaviour is rational must be determined on the basis of investigation. The notion of rationality is itself complex. For example, Simon[5] suggests three possible types of rationality.

An action would be 'objectively' rational if it maximised given values in a given situation, 'subjectively' rational if it maximised attainment in terms of the subject's awareness of the various

[3] J. Tizard, 'The Objectives and Organisation of Educational and Day Care Services for Young Children', *Oxford Review of Education*, 1, 3, 1975, 211-221, reports that in two localities in London there were no social class differences in the pattern of demand itself.

[4] W. J. Filstead, *Qualitative Methology*. Markham, Chicago, 1970, 6-7.

[5] H. A. Simon, Administrative Behaviour: A Study of Decision Making Processes in *Administrative Organisation*, New York, Macmillan, 1948, 76-77.

alternatives open to him, and 'personally' rational if it was oriented to the individual's goals.

Further, since the classic experiment of La Piere[6] comparing verbal and non-verbal behaviour, strong empirical evidence has supported the idea that there may be no relationship between what people say and what they do.[7] The perspective adopted in this research is, therefore, that it is a "messy world".

> "Where the same people will make different utterances under different conditions and will behave differently in different situations, and will say one thing while doing another."[8].

Interviewing is a highly suitable technique for gaining the type of information required by this study because it allows free rein to the respondent, can be both subtle and flexible and can bring out the variety, reservations and ambiguities, the principles and the expedient exceptions to principle. However, a constant theme in the research design is the comparison of verbal responses and actual actions. Members of the research team carried out personal interviews with the mothers so that such qualitative data as the above could be obtained. It was thus possible for the interviewer to ask a range of structured questions and to provide standard descriptions of various types of facilities if the interviewee required them, but also allowed sufficient flexibility for the interviewer to ask probing questions where she felt that the standard ones did not give the mother opportunity to provide an adequate explanation of her feelings or her situation.

In order to create a situation in which the maximum amount of information could be gained from the mothers and to create a situation in which they felt free to express themselves the interviewers were freed from the necessity of writing everything down by tape-recording the interviews. A small cassette recorder was used. In most situations it did not appear to influence the flow of conversation but 11 mothers did not wish to be recorded.

In the design of the schedule, care was taken to provide checks on the extent to which the mother was giving socially acceptable or simply unconsidered responses. For example, when a mother indicated a desire to send her child to a nursery school she was asked questions about the practical implications of this, such as whether she knew the hours involved, whether she could get anyone to look after

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[6] R. J. La Piere, "Attitudes vs Actions", *Social Forces*, 13, 1934, 230-237.

[7] C. Wright Mills describes the "disparities between talk and action" as "the central methodological problem of the social sciences". 'Methodological Consequences of the Sociology of Knowledge', *American Journal of Sociology*, 46, 1940, 316-330.

[8] J. Deutscher, 'Words and Deeds: Social Sciences and Social Policy', *Social Problems*, 13, 1965, 233-254.

her other children whilst she took this one and whether suitable transport existed.

Categorisation and coding of the data followed the Newson pattern.

> "It is essential to our technique that we do not settle on even preliminary categorisation until we have finished pilot interviewing; and our full coding schedule is not finalised until we have completed about a hundred interviews and can see how the data is patterning. It is also true that the more freely an area has been explored in conversation, the greater confidence one can have in finally assigning coding categories to the respondent's replies; even if by that time one is uncomfortably aware of elusive subtleties which would be ill served by any coding scheme."[9]

For our project, this meant the following.

(1) We conducted approximately 20 pilot interviews to develop an interview schedule and an initial coding schedule. Detailed discussions between team members, with the aid of tape-recordings took place during this stage, in order to improve (a) the schedule, and (b) interviewing techniques.

(2) After completing approximately 100 of the 600 interviews the coding schedule was more or less finalised although discussions about the coding continued.

Analysis

The interview responses were coded back in the office by listening to the tape recording. At this time interesting quotes were also selected.

The coded material was placed on punch cards and the analysis carried out by computer with the use of S.P.S.S. programmes.

In view of the small numbers of respondents in each category when any more detailed analyses were carried out only simple statistical techniques were useful. The x^2 test of significance was generally applied.

There is obviously more data than that presented here.[10] The issues chosen for discussion in the report are those that emerged during the progress of the research and from the final analysis.

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[9] Newson, J. and E., 'Parental Roles and Social Context', in Shipman, M.D. (Ed), *The Organisation and Impact of Social Research: Six original case studies in education and behavioural science*, Routledge, 1976.

[10] Additional tables and copies of schedules can be obtained from the Scottish Council for Research in Education.

The Sample

Mothers of pre-school children were initially identified by the lists provided by Lothian Region Education Department. In addition, each respondent was asked where the nearest pre-school children lived. Table 29 gives the sample size in relation to the size of

TABLE 29

SAMPLE SIZE

Area	*Number of interviews*	*Number of pre-school children*	*Refusals*	*Not contacted*
City centre				
Stockbridge	104	139	2	0
London Street	91	114	1	2
	195	253	3	2
Outskirts				
Gracemount	194	259	6	13
Rural				
Gilford	52	66	1	3
Humbie	4	5	0	3
Saltoun	21	26	1	1
Dirleton	21	29	1	0
Fala & Soutra	8	10	0	0
Borthwick	14	19	0	0
Temple	7	7	0	0
Cousland	18	24	1	1
Torphichen	24	29	1	1
Bridgend	28	41	2	10
	197	256	7	19
Total	586	768	16	34

population in each area. Very few people refused to be interviewed outright but some who created difficulties about when they could be interviewed were described as refusals. The interviewers returned to each house several times at different times of the day before it was decided that the person should be classified as 'Not contacted'.

In most cases, the mother was interviewed with no other adult present (Table 30). Fathers and grandmothers were interviewed when they were responsible for looking after the child for the major part of every day. When both parents were present attention was focussed on the mother.

TABLE 30

INTERVIEW RESPONDENT

Respondent	
Mother	570
Father	4
Mother and father	10
Grandmother	2
Total	586

The demographic information given in Tables 31-36 was obtained during the course of the interviews with the exception of the type of housing in Table 33 which was simply observed and recorded by the interviewers.

TABLE 31

NUMBER OF IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

	Both parents	*Mother*
Stockbridge	3	0
London Street	7	0
Gracemount	2	1
Rural areas	0	1
Total	12	2
Percentage of sample[1]	2%	0.3%

[1] Persons with neither parent born in UK (Census 1971) Scotland 2.5% Lothian Region 2.5%, Edinburgh City 2.9%.

TABLE 32

NUMBER OF LONE PARENTS BY AREA OF RESIDENCE[1]

	City centre	*Outskirts*	*Rural*
Lone mothers	14	23	2
Lone fathers	2	1	0
Total	16	24	2
Percentage of sample	8%	12%	1%

[1] According to the Finer Report (1974) in 1971 there were 620,000 one-parent families in Britain, i.e., one tenth of all families with children. Census (10%) sample Scotland lone mothers with children 0-4 were 5.5% of all wives and mothers with children 0-4.

TABLE 33

TYPE OF HOUSING BY AREA

	City centre		*Outskirts*		*Rural*	
	Private	*Local authority*	*Private*	*Local authority*	*Private*	*Local authority*
Detached house	—	—	45	—	74	—
Semi-terraced house	29	—	30	11	44	64
High-rise flat	—	1	—	46	—	—
Other flats	164	1	6	56	7	8
Total	193	2	81	113	125	72

TABLE 34

R.G. CLASSIFICATION OF HUSBAND'S CURRENT OCCUPATION[1]

	City centre	*Outskirts*	*Rural*
	%	%	%
RG I, II, IIINM	61	53	37
IIIM, IV, V	35	43	60
Not currently employed	4	4	3
N=	181	171	195

[1] Total excludes lone mothers.

TABLE 35

AGE OF MOTHERS[1]

		%
Up to 20 years	16	3
21-30 years	361	62
31-40 years	181	31
over 40 years	24	4
Total	581	100

[1] Total excludes 3 lone fathers and 2 grandparents.

TABLE 36

SIZE OF FAMILIES

Number of children			*Number of pre-school children*		
		%			%
1	192	33	1	414	71
2	261	45	2	162	28
3	95	16	3	10	2
4	25	4			
5 or more	13	2			
N=	586			586	

TABLE 37

NUMBER OF MOTHERS WORKING BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

Mothers employed	*City centre*		*Outskirts*		*Rural*		*Total*	
		%		%		%		%
Over 30 hours	12	6	9	5	2	1	23	4
Up to 30 hours	43	22	53	27	54	28	150	26
Not at all	138	72	132	68	139	71	409	70
Total	193		193		195		581	

TABLE 38

MOTHERS' JOURNEY TO WORK BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

	City centre		*Outskirts*		*Rural*		*Total*	
		%		%		%		%
Work at home	10	18	6	10	10	18	26	15
Travel on foot	12	22	12	19	15	27	39	23
Travel by bus or car	27	49	40	65	28	50	52	30
No response	6	11	4	6	3	5	13	8
Total	55		62		56		173	

Although more mothers have to go to work by bus or car in our outskirts area (65%) than have to do so in the city centre areas (49%), this is mainly due to the fact that more mothers living in the centre of the city work at home.

B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

FOR MOTHERS IN OUTSKIRTS, CITY CENTRE AND RURAL AREAS, WITH A CHILD WHO HAS NOT YET STARTED PRIMARY SCHOOL

1) How many children have you? What are their names?
When were they born?
How many of them have not gone to school yet?
2) Do you take the children who have not gone to school yet anywhere to be looked after during the day? If yes, where?
Have you taken (child's name) anywhere/anywhere different to be looked after in the past? If yes, where?
When did you stop taking (child)?
Why did you stop?
Do you think you will take (child) anywhere to be looked after before he/she goes to school? If yes, where? Why?

Those mothers currently using some kind of provision

3) How long have you been taking (child) to (facility)? When did he start?
Why did you start taking him?
Why did you start taking him at that particular time?
4) How did you find out about the place?
How did you get the place?
Did you have to wait for a place? If so, how long did you have to wait?
5) Would you have preferred to take him somewhere else?
Would you have taken him somewhere else if he had been a different age?
Have you tried to get him in anywhere else? If so, where? When?

Additional question for those mothers whose children had gone somewhere/somewhere different in the past.

Why did you stop taking him?

6) How much does it cost (fees and travelling)?
Was the cost something that you thought about when you were deciding where to take him?
Those who pay — Would you have taken him somewhere else if it had cost less?
Those who don't pay — Would you be prepared to pay? If so, how much?

Additional question for those mothers whose children had gone somewhere/somewhere different in the past.

Was the cost a reason for stopping taking him?

7) Which days does he go?
If not every day, could he go on different days?
Do these days suit you?
Do they suit him?
8) Could he go for more/less days?
Would it be better for you if he went for more/less days?
Would it be better for him if he went for more/less days?
9) Does he go all the year round or does he get holidays?
Does this suit you?
Does this suit him?
10) How many hours a day does he go for? Which hours?
Could he go for a longer/shorter period?
Are these hours suitable for him?
Are these hours suitable for you?
What do you do whilst he is there?
Would some other hours suit you better?
11) Do you take him to (facility)?
How do get him there?
Is it far away?
How long does it take?
Is that arrangement all right? If not, how could it be improved?
12) Do you go into the (facility)? If not, why not?
If so, how long do you stay?
Would you like to stay longer? Why?

Additional questions for those mothers intending to take their children somewhere/somewhere different in the future.

Would you like to stay there with him? If not, why not?
If yes, why?
How long for?
What would you like to do?

13) Do mothers have any say in the running (facility)? If yes, do you help?
If not, would you like to help organise (facility)? Why/why not?
14) What kind of facilities are provided at (facility)?
Do you think they could be improved?
What kind of things do the children do?
Is this what you want for (child)? If so, why? If not, why not?
What would you like them to do?
15) Do you think that he is learning anything?
What is he learning?

16) Is it advantageous or disadvantageous to him to go to (facility)?
In what way?
Is that why you take him? Why do you take him then?
17) Do you think it will be advantageous or disadvantageous to him in the future?
If so, in what way?
18) Is it advantageous or disadvantageous to you to take him to (facility)?
In what way?
Is this why you take him? Why do you take him then?

Mothers who have not used any facilities and do not intend to

19) Is there any reason why you have not taken (child) anywhere to be looked after?
Have you ever tried to get him in anywhere?
If so, where? When? What happened?
20) Would you like to take him somewhere now?
If so, why don't you then?
If not, why not?
21) Would you have liked to in the past?
If not, why not?
If so, why didn't you then?
Was it because the facilities provided were not suitable?
If so, what kind of facility would suit you?
Would this suit (child)?
22) Are they on any waiting list now?
If so, where? How long have they been on it?

Background questions for all mothers

23) Do you look after the children all the time/all the rest of the time or do you have some help?
If no, have you ever had any help?
If yes, who? When?
How do they help?
Where do they look after them?
Do you pay them?
24) Are there many children living in this area?
Where are the nearest children under school age?
25) Who lives here with you and your children? Husband/father? Grandparents?
Others?
Does he/they look after the children who don't go to school?
If yes, how often? For how long?

26) Do you get out without your children as often as you would like to or not?
Daytime/evening?
How often do you get out without them?

27) Do you feel that you see enough people to talk to during the day or not?

28) Does your husband work? If yes, regular hours or shift work?
Do you mind telling me what kind of work he does?
Where does he work?
Has he any special position there?

29) How old was he when he left school?
Did he have any further education?
Who decides where the children should go?
If mother, does your husband usually agree?

30) How old were you when you left school? How old are you now?
Did you have any further education?
What kind of work did you do when you left school?
Who did you work for?
Did you have any special position there?
Do you still work?
If yes, what do you do?
Who do you work for?
What hours do you work? How many days a week?
How long does it take you to get to your work?
Do you like working?
Why do you work?
If no. Would you like to work (now/when child starts school)?
If yes, why?
What as?
Have you done anything about it?
If not, why not?

31) Is there any reason why any of your children should have a special need for facilities (pre-school child/other child)?
Do any members of the family have any kind of illness or handicap?
If yes, which member of the family?
What is it?
Do they require special care?

32) Have you been living in (area) since your children were born?
If no, how long have you lived here?
Where did you live before?

33) Do you think that there are enough facilities provided for mothers and young children in this area?

34) Apart from (facilities mentioned) are there any other kinds of places in this area that you could take your child to be looked after during the day?
Are there any places for younger children?
Are there any places for older children?
Is there anywhere you can take them for a short while?
35) Could you tell me a little about these places and the differences between them?
Are they open for the same hours?
Do they cost anything/the same?
Do the children do the same things while they are there?
Who runs them?
Do they have trained staff? How trained?
Do mothers help?
How did you find out about these places?
36) Do facilities exist in other areas that are not available here?
37) Have you heard of (facilities not previously mentioned)?
What do you know about (facilities)?
Are there any in this area?
38) Is there anything else you would like to say about nurseries, playgroups or any other services for small children?
39) Type of accommodation?

APPENDIX II

A

INTERVENTION STUDY OF THE ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE USAGE OF PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES

In order to examine the assumption that advertising pre-school facilities influences the pattern of demand we had to act as though it were fact. That is, we had to study an area in which there is as much provision as is required. The reason for this was that it would have been unethical for us to advertise provision in an area where there were no available places and such a course of action might have created problems for the local authority. It was, therefore, agreed that we should study Leith.

Pre-school provision in Leith

The map below shows the area of our study defined in terms of primary school catchment areas. It suited our purposes for the following reasons. It is a distinct geographical area. The different social class groups are reasonably represented. It contains examples of all the main types of pre-school facilities with which we were concerned. We have not been concerned with creches, playbuses or other special types of playgroups or toy libraries. However, there are nursery schools and classes run by the education department; there are day nurseries and daycarers organised by the social work department; and community playgroups, private playgroups, mother-and-toddler groups, and childminders registered with the social work department. We wanted an area in which there had not really been any important recent debates about pre-school provision so that the effect of the information we provided would be maximised. Whilst this was true of Leith to a certain extent, we did find, as the study progressed, that because there were plenty of pre-school places the facilities had tended to make themselves known even if they did not advertise on a wide scale. For example, about a year earlier the mother-and-toddler group in the centre of Leith had

FIGURE 8

FACILITIES FOR UNDER 5'S IN LEITH

distributed about 100 leaflets, containing information about the group, to mothers out shopping one Saturday morning — apparently with little success, as we were told that only about 3 mothers showed any interest at the time and only 1 mother actually went to the group.

Table 39 shows the facilities, and official number of places, in each primary school catchment area. We have placed alongside a number of 0 to 5 year olds living in each primary school catchment area so

TABLE 39

NUMBER OF PRE-SCHOOL PLACES IN EACH PRIMARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREA IN LEITH

Primary school catchment area	*Facility*	*Number of places*	*Total*	*0-5's**
Bonnington	Bonnington Nursery Class	50		
	Stanwell Nursery School	110		
	South Fort Street Day Nursery	45	237	94
	Summerside Playgroup	30		
	Childminder	2		
Fort	Albany Nursery School	65		
	Fort Nursery Class	50	139	141
	St. Ninian's Playgroup	24		
Hermitage Park	Hermitage Park Nursery Class	30		
	Lochend Playgroup	30	82	142
	Y.W.C.A. Playgroup	20		
	Childminder	2		
Leith Academy	St. Mary's Nursery Class	38		
	Pilrig Day Nursery	40		
	Newkirkgate Playgroup	20	124	91
	Pilrig/Dalmeny Playgroup	24		
	Childminder	2		
Links	Links Nursery Class	40	40	151
Lorne	Dalmeny Playgroup	30	54	93
	St. Paul's Playgroup	24		
Trinity	Victoria Park Day Nursery	60		
	Bangholm Playgroup	30	104	126
	Mrs. McGibbon's Playgroup	10		
	2 childminders	4		
Victoria	None	—	—	64
TOTAL			780	885

*Lothian Region Education Department statistics as of September, 1978

that the level of provision can be seen. However, they must be treated with caution. The figure includes young babies and toddlers who would not be eligible for playgroups and nursery schools. The list does not include mother-and-toddler groups. The figures were taken from the Scottish Education Department's statistical survey which was a year out of date. It therefore included some five year olds who would have started primary school and did not include children born in the last year. Finally, children do not necessarily attend facilities in the primary school catchment area in which they live. Our data suggests, for example, that they are more likely to go to the nursery class or playgroup within their primary school catchment area than a day nursery or nursery school. Some children from outside the area we have defined as Leith attend the facilities listed here. However, the overall impression of a surfeit of provision is too forceful to be denied by such considerations.

We needed a way of comparing applications to pre-school facilities before and after our action, or information-giving, and a controlled programme of attempts to increase the level of knowledge of the residents of this area. A description of each follows.

Monitoring the pattern of demand

In order to look at the demand for pre-school places in Leith, we had to have the co-operation of all the local authority and voluntary provision in the Leith area. We designed forms which were to be completed each time that a parent or guardian enquired about a place in a nursery school or class, a playgroup, a day nursery, or with a childminder. Similarly, we had a form which was completed, by the person responsible for allocating places, every time a child left.

This monitoring started 1st August, 1977. As described below, Leith was flooded with information about pre-school facilities in August and September, 1978. The monitoring continued until 1st August, 1979 so that we could look at the influences of our actions over the whole year cycle.

Comments about the monitoring

The forms which were returned from playgroups were more likely to have been completed by the mother than those returned from nursery units or day nurseries. This seems to be partly a reflection of the playgroup movement ideology but also of the practical constraints of the playgroup situation. Day nurseries and some nursery units routinely collect most of the basic factual information we requested anyway. However, more detailed questions such as those asking where the parent had found out about the facility were not asked by anybody, despite repeated requests for them to do so by the research team.

It tended to be only 'serious' enquiries which were recorded. For example, the day nurseries will point out the criteria of eligibility to a mother and if she is immediately not appropriate, her application may go no further than a telephone call. As it was therefore not feasible to complete a form for them, we asked for the numbers of such cases to be recorded.

Comparing different ways of informing people

We have four different phases in our programme of information presentation which will be described below. We wanted to compare the effect of giving people information in a written form, in a spoken form and using a visual medium. We therefore delivered leaflets, arranged discussion sessions and showed a television programme about pre-school provision, in the following sequence so that we could try to separate the influence of each.

(1) *Information leaflets*

Leaflets describing the characteristics of each of the major types of facilities in the area were delivered to the houses of pre-school children. The leaflets were made as eye-catching as possible and the information kept to a minimum. Each type of provision was dealt with as a separate section so that they could be read selectively. The list of actual places in the area was on a separate sheet, inserted in the folded leaflet. This meant that it could be updated if necessary. The addresses were taken from the Education Department's statistical survey of the previous year. Table 40 shows the number of houses that were visited and the number of families with pre-school children living there. It is interesting to note the high level of movement out of the area in the time between the Education Department's and our survey, in view of the high ratio of provision to numbers of children under five in the area. This period of time varied from a few months to a year depending on when their survey had been carried out.

TABLE 40

DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION LEAFLETS

	Primary school catchment area				
	Bonnington	*Leith Academy*	*Links*	*Lorne*	*Total*
Number visited	88	62	83	85	319
Number moved house	46	16	16	18	96
Number not at home	29	26	29	35	119
Number contacted	13	20	39	32	104
New families	1	—	—	2	3

The objective was to see how many mothers saw the leaflets, how many read them and how many said that they had learned anything from them. As one of our main concerns in the whole study was to get information to as many people as possible, rather than delivering a few leaflets and returning several times, we spread our resources thinly. We delivered leaflets to four of the primary school catchment areas and only returned once the following day to see if the mother was at home. Thus, as Table 40 shows, our sample total was 107 mothers.

(2) *Coffee and discussion sessions*

We arranged and advertised three coffee and discussion sessions. The first was in the afternoon, in the community room of a high rise block of flats and was publicised by means of posters in local shops. The second was arranged for a morning in the Community Centre in the middle of Leith and was publicised fairly widely by means of posters in shops and two paragraphs in the 'Evening News'. The third was arranged for a more specific group of people, namely, the mothers who attended the nearby mother-and-toddler group. They were sent a letter telling them that everyone in their group was being invited. The meeting was held in the evening in the Newkirkgate Community Centre. A representative from the Regional and Edinburgh Social Work Departments, the Education Department and the Scottish Pre-School Playgroups Association attended each meeting as our panel of experts.

The coffee and discussion sessions were in some senses a complete disaster but in other ways very rewarding. I should not like to repeat such an exercise purely because it is extremely difficult to expect one's invited speakers to be as philosophical about a tiny audience as the research team are themselves. There were a number of ways in which this exercise was rewarding. On each occasion our four experts, a total of eight people, rose to the occasion. At the first meeting, they carried on unperturbed and outlined and discussed provision with the one mother and her child.

At the second meeting, a discussion about the difficulties facing playgroups in the Leith area ensued. It was reported that there was a danger of playgroups becoming 'toddler' groups in an area where there is no shortage of nursery unit places. Mothers were tending to take their child to a playgroup only until the child was old enough to take up a nursery unit place. It was also stated that some mothers took their children to one place for the morning and to somewhere different for the afternoon. The discussion seemed to suggest that it would be desirable for all the people involved with pre-school provision in this area to get together and talk about co-operation rather than competition. As a result, one of our experts organised a

meeting under the umbrella of Committee for the Under Fives which exists in the Lothian region. This meeting, to which we were invited, took place about a month later in the same room. It was fairly well attended and was seen as the first of a series of such meetings. Largely because of our activity in the Leith area, the Social Work Department and the Scottish Pre-School Playgroups Association ran a course for mothers and playleaders. They attributed the high attendance to the interest created by our study.

At the third coffee and discussion session there was a very lively discussion about the mother-and-toddler group. The mothers talked about why they went and what it meant to them. One mother who was not currently attending because her eldest child was too old, and her youngest, too young, described how not going had changed the social pattern of her life. She said that she did not come to this part of Leith any more and did not go to the same shops and so on. The ladies talked about how they had felt when they first went to the mother-and-toddler sessions and about whether they now made other mothers feel welcome. They thought that perhaps they did not always do so because they were busy chatting to the people they knew. They observed that some newcomers did not return after their first visit. For some, this could have been because they had made a friend, or friends, that day and so never needed to come back. They felt, however, that their large, noisy group might not suit everybody.

(3) *Television sessions*

A video-tape recording showing the main characteristics of day nurseries, nursery units, playgroups and the childminding service was made in Leith. It was hoped that this would increase interest as well as making it relevant to the local situation. We wanted to get the reaction to it of different groups of mothers, namely, those using different kinds of provision and non-users. Again, they were asked to complete a questionnaire about the things they had learned, if any, from the programme.[1]

We arranged to show the programme in each of the facilities in the area generally just before the time the mothers usually collected their children. They were invited by means of a letter explaining the content of the programme. This gave us groups of mothers using each kind of facility. We also took along our television set to three mother-and-toddler groups and two baby clinics. In this way we hoped to get groups of mothers who were not currently using any other provision. As all this was specifically designed for the parents of pre-school children, we also arranged two showings for the general public, one morning and one evening, in the community centre. Only one person

[1] A copy of this video tape is available for borrowing, at SCRE, 16 Moray Place, Edinburgh EH3 6DR.

came to see the programme as a result of seeing one of our posters advertising it.

Showings were arranged by the Local Community Education Officer in a church hall, in the community room of a block of flats and in a private house in a middle class residential area. Nobody came to the meeting in the church hall. The meeting in the middle class home developed into a general discussion. The participants complained about the lack of facilities within walking distance from their homes. It was finally agreed that they, with the assistance of the Community Education Officer, should carry out a survey to see how much demand there was from parents in their immediate vicinity as a prelude to trying to get something started. They placed questionnaires in the local doctors' surgeries and clinics.

(4) *General campaign*

Ours was not a campaign in the sense of persuading people. We simply wanted to look at the effects of increasing people's level of knowledge. However, once the controlled part of our experiment was over, we were joined in our efforts by some of the people responsible for running the facilities in Leith. A few months earlier we had written to everyone we thought might be interested and invited them to a meeting. At this meeting we explained what we were intending to do and asked for ideas. We suggested that this would be an ideal opportunity for groups to do something for themselves and we offered as much assistance as was possible. Anything which amounted to advertising facilities during the early part of September, 1978 was welcome.

The ventures had differing degrees of success. The playgroup, the nursery school and the day nursery which were in our television programme, all held an 'Open Week'. Some of them went to considerable lengths to make the place look attractive and to be able to demonstrate their activities to visitors. They advertised and we advertised the open week for them by means of posters in shops, launderettes, hairdressers and so on, all over the area and by announcing it on Radio Forth. However, only two visitors went to the nursery school and none to the playgroup or the day nursery.

We rented a shop in the centre of Leith in order to provide a place to display information about facilities. Playleaders from the local playgroups and others involved with the playgroups in the area, put up a display and manned the shop all week. They answered queries and gave out leaflets. On one morning, they ran a playgroup in the shop. Mothers were invited for a cup of coffee whilst their children played. If they wished, they could discuss provision but anyway they could see for themselves the kind of activities in which children engaged at playgroups. This was reasonably successful and, although

the shop was generally quiet, it was felt that the exercise had been worthwhile.

The most successful venture in terms of numbers was the research team's 'Paint In'. We set up easels and a display with photographs and information in the Newkirkgate shopping centre on a Saturday morning. Young children were invited to paint a picture and whilst they did so we talked to their parents about pre-school facilities and gave them our information leaflets. When the children had finished, their paintings were hung among the balloons to dry and they were given a badge, which read 'Under 5 in Leith', to wear. By actually being in the street it was possible to also give leaflets to those parents hurrying past without either the time or the inclination to stop and see what was going on.

Finally, we have displayed about 150 posters in various locations. They are intended to draw attention to the fact that pre-school facilities exist in the area. In some cases, we left information leaflets with the posters.

B

QUESTIONNAIRE

completed by research team members when they returned to the house where leaflets had been delivered the previous day.

Area .....

Name and Address .....

Type of Housing Private ☐ Corporation ☐

Detached ☐ Semi, terraced ☐

Tenement ☐ H. Rise ☐ Other ☐

On return Mother out ☐ in ☐ new family ☐

Family Number of children ☐ pre-school children ☐ ages .....

Pre-school facilities used playgroup☐ nursery school☐ day nursery☐
childminder☐ mother and toddler☐

Did you see the leaflet about places for pre-school children which was put through the door yesterday? Yes☐ No☐

Did you read the leaflet? Yes☐ No☐

Did it tell you anything you did not already know about a

	PG	NS	DN	CM	M&T
Yes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
No	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What?	PG	NS	DN	CM	M&T
ACTIVITIES	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HOURS	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
COST	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AGES	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
STAFF	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MOTHER INVOLVEMENT	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RUN BY	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
OTHER	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Did it change your opinion of	PG	NS	DN	CM	M&T
Yes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
No	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Has it changed your plans for your child/ren?

Yes ☐ No☐ Not relevant — going to school☐

How?.....

.....

C

QUESTIONNAIRE

completed by mothers after watching a video tape presentation describing the main characteristics of different types of pre-school provision.

1. Questionnaire completed by mother of a child at

playgroup	☐ *TICK AS MANY*
nursery school	☐ *AS NECESSARY*
nursery class	☐
day nursery	☐
with a childminder	☐
not currently using any provision	☐

Other (PLEASE STATE).....

.....

2. Did the programme show you anything you did not know about a PLAYGROUP?

Yes ☐ *TICK ONE*
No ☐

IF YES

Were you surprised about the

activities	☐ *TICK AS MANY*
physical surroundings	☐ *AS NECESSARY*
hours	☐
cost	☐
age of the children	☐
number of staff	☐
mothers' involvement	☐

Anything else?.....

.....

3. Did the programme show you anything you did not know about a NURSERY SCHOOL?

Yes ☐ *TICK ONE*
No ☐

IF YES

Were you surprised about the

activities	☐ *TICK AS MANY*
physical surroundings	☐ *AS NECESSARY*
hours	☐
cost	☐
age of the children	☐
number of staff	☐
mothers' involvement	☐

Anything else?.....

.....

4. Did the programme show you anything you did not know about a DAY NURSERY?

Yes ☐ *TICK ONE*
No ☐

IF YES

Were you surprised about the

activities	☐ *TICK AS MANY*
physical surroundings	☐ *AS NECESSARY*
hours	☐
cost	☐
age of the children	☐
number of staff	☐
mothers' involvement	☐

Anything else?.....

.....

5. Did the programme show you anything you did not know about a CHILDMINDER?

Yes ☐ *TICK ONE*
No ☐

IF YES

Were you surprised about the

activities	☐ *TICK AS MANY*
physical surroundings	☐ *AS NECESSARY*
hours	☐
cost	☐
age of the children	☐
number of staff	☐
mothers' involvement	☐
number of children allowed	☐
need to register	☐

Anything else?.....

.....

6. Did the programme change your opinion of a

CHILDMINDER for the better ☐ worse ☐ not at all ☐ *TICK ONE*

DAY NURSERY for the better ☐ worse ☐ not at all ☐ *TICK ONE*

NURSERY SCHOOL or CLASS for the better ☐ worse ☐ not at all ☐ *TICK ONE*

PLAYGROUP for the better ☐ worse ☐ not at all ☐ *TICK ONE*

7. Did you like seeing the television programme?

Yes ☐ *TICK ONE*
No ☐

Would you rather have

read about it	☐ *TICK AS MANY*
had a talk given to you	☐ *AS NECESSARY*
been told in some other way	☐

How?.....

.....

8. *Mothers currently using some kind of provision*

Do you think that you are using the best provision for your child now?

Yes	☐	TICK ONE
No	☐	
Don't know	☐	

IF NO

Which do you think might be better?

playgroup	☐	*TICK AS MANY*
nursery school or class	☐	*AS NECESSARY*
childminder	☐	
day nursery	☐	

Mothers not currently using some kind of provision

Did you intend using any before you saw this programme?

Yes	☐	*TICK ONE*
No	☐	
Don't know	☐	

Do you intend using any now?

Yes	☐	*TICK ONE*
No	☐	
Don't know	☐	

Which?

playgroup	☐	*TICK AS MANY*
nursery school or class	☐	*AS NECESSARY*
childminder	☐	
day nursery	☐	

APPENDIX III

A

A STUDY OF NON-USERS, INFREQUENT USERS AND UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS TO PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES

This study was specifically designed to study people not making use of pre-school facilities. Provision of such facilities in Lothian region compares very favourably with other regions. Thus, by initially studying areas which contained a reasonable representation of each social class group and in the city at least, an example of each kind of pre-school facility, we had largely studied users. Questions about demand cannot be answered without looking at both groups.

To find larger numbers of non-users we obviously had to go to an area where there was not sufficient provision for all the children in the area. This almost inevitably led us to a disadvantaged area. There are some middle class areas of the city with a shortage of facilities but it would have not have been as interesting to study such an area for two reasons. First, the majority of such mothers could have been expected to want pre-school 'educational' facilities rather than care for their children. Secondly, they are more able to travel to facilities in other areas than mothers in the area we chose for study.

The area chosen for study was described to us as short of facilities and is often described as a 'deprived area' for many reasons. Although we were not looking at 'need' in the terms of any outside agency we were interested in the demands made by mothers with problems.

The study area

It was decided that two primary school catchment areas would provide sufficient numbers in each of our categories — non-user, drop-out, irregular user and on a waiting list. There was 1 day nursery, 3 nursery units and 3 playgroups in this area. We knew that

the day nursery had a long waiting list and that the nursery units did have some children, old enough to start, on their waiting lists.

This area is one of almost entirely local authority housing. It is mostly either tenement flats or terraced houses but there are a few high-rise blocks and some balcony-access flats. Most of the building took place around 1946 and now dampness is a serious problem in the area[1]. According to Census data in 1971, 16% of the households were overcrowded, that is, there were more than 1½ persons per room.

A common complaint of residents is that the area is used as a dumping ground for 'problem families' from other areas of the city. From 1st November 1972 to 31st January 1978, 114 families evicted from council property in Edinburgh were rehoused in Pilton, a slightly larger area which contains the one we studied. 47 families were rehoused in other areas of the city during the same period[2]. The housing department's policy is to rehouse evicted families simply where surplus housing is available; Pilton contains a large number of empty houses and flats. Since many of these families already have problems associated with their eviction this has an obvious effect on the community.

There is a considerable fluctuation of population in the area. A recent study[3] indicated that between 1971 and 1976 the rate of out-migration of families with young children was 13% above the Edinburgh average. However, the birth-rate was 25% above the city average. According to Census figures in 1971, 50% of the population were under twenty years old compared with 30% of the population in the rest of the city.

The unemployment rate is high. In April 1978, the unemployment level for the Pilton area was estimated to be 9.2% compared with 6.2% for Edinburgh as a whole.

The area is generally unattractive. Most of the streets and gardens are strewn with litter, broken glass, and dog dirt.

The sample

The sample of non-users was obtained by a process of elimination. The names on the registers of the pre-school facilities in the area were compared with Education Department lists of children living in the area. A note was made of the children who were old enough to attend a nursery unit or a playgroup but did not appear to be doing so. This produced a list of 57 non-users. Health Visitors and social workers were also asked for names of non-users but none were supplied.

[1] The Pilton Area Dampness Group exists to fight for improvements in conditions for tenants in the area.

[2] Information presented to meeting of Edinburgh District Council, 23rd February 1978.

[3] City of Edinburgh District Council, Social and Community Development Project, Pilton Study, 1978.

The names of children on waiting lists and children who were infrequent attenders and drop-outs were supplied by the facilities. Whereas children on waiting lists for the nursery units were followed up only if they lived within our defined area and if they were over three years old, children on the day nursery waiting list were followed up whatever their age and wherever they lived. The reasons for this were that first, we were particularly interested in how this group managed whilst they were waiting for a place. Secondly, day nurseries tend to have a larger catchment area than other facilities and thirdly, they take children from a few weeks old. In fact, 10 of the mothers with children on the day nursery waiting list who were interviewed, lived outside our defined area.

134 people were identified as of possible interest to us. However, 39 (29%) had moved out of the area, 30 (22%) were found to be actually attending a facility and 7 could not be contacted. A total of 58 mothers were interviewed. There were 12 non-users, 14 had children who were drop-outs, 9 were irregular users and 23 had children on waiting lists.

The study

Mothers were interviewed with a semi-structured schedule which was developed through piloting in an adjoining area. 49 of the interviews were tape-recorded. Two people refused to let the interviewer into the house and very brief interviews were therefore carried out on the doorstep.

The usual pattern was for the interviewer to listen to the tape-recording and write down responses on the schedule back at the office. A note was also made of interesting quotations. The interviewers also noted any visual impressions which they thought would help them interpret the mothers' responses.

General characteristics of the sample

67% of the sample of interviewed mothers were married or cohabiting, 19% were divorced, widowed or separated and 9% were unmarried. The marital status of the remaining 5% is not known.

12% of the sample had 5 or more children. At the time of the study 9% had three children not at school, 47% had two, and 45% had one child not at school.

9% had lived in their present house for less than six months, 26% for less than a year and a further 48% for less than four years. 31% of the families had previously lived in another part of Pilton. 47% had moved from some other part of Edinburgh. 27% of the families shared their homes with somebody else. 10% lived with the mother's or father's parents. 66% of the sample lived in tenement flats. 29% lived in high-rise or balcony-access flats. The interviewers defined

43% of the homes they visited as in a poor condition. There was a subjective judgement which took into account the level of cleanliness, tidiness and the amount and condition of furniture. Three mothers lived in homes with only one bedroom which they therefore had to share with the children.

9 mothers were employed part-time and 1 full-time. This was 17% of the sample. 5 were in jobs classified as RGV[4], 3 RGIV, and 2 IIINM. A further 2 mothers were actively seeking work. 27% of mothers not currently working said that they would like to work full-time and 19% said they would like to work part-time.

26% of the fathers, husbands, or cohabitees were unemployed. 4% of those working were in RG IIINM occupations, 42% in RG IIIM, 38% in RG IV and 17% in RG V.

Analysis

Basic information about respondents was placed on coding sheets to enable simple cross-tabulation tables to be quickly produced. This was all that was necessary in view of the small-scale nature of the study.

An analytic distinction was made between non-users, drop-outs, and irregular attenders although in practice the distinction was sometimes blurred.

The issues discussed are those that emerged as interesting during the course of the research and which were pursued by the interviewer. The whole study was designed in response to the findings of the larger study of parental demand in relation to supply and these were supplemented wherever possible.

[4] Registrar General's classification of occupations, 1970.

B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

for non-users, irregular attenders, and waiting list children in an area with a shortage of pre-school facilities

Address:

Date of interview:

Respondent: Mother Father Other

Do you have any children who are not at school yet? Any other children?
Do you take them to any playgroups or nurseries? Where?
Is (child's name) on a waiting list/have you applied anywhere? Where?
Have you ever taken child/applied anywhere else? Where? When?

Reasons for use/non-use

1) How long has he been going/on waiting list/did he go? *Going all the time? Why not?*
2) Why did you start/want him to go (at that particular time)? *Special reasons: Single parent; need to work/debt; child's benefit/health; mother's benefit/health/stress; others.* Did anyone suggest it? *Professional/relatives.*
3) Why did you stop?
4) Would you like to take child anywhere/anywhere else? *Where? Why/why not? Why don't you?*

Knowledge and suitability of facilities

1) Does/would facility suit? *Mother: hours, cost, travelling, other. Child: (as above) Enjoys it? Settled in? Any difference in him?* Is it any benefit to take him?
2) Does/did he go every day? *Why not?*
3) How are you managing while you wait for a place? *Family/friends. Taking/intending to take him anywhere else?*
4) Is there/prefer anywhere else for him? *Suit mother/child better? Where? Same type/other type. Different hours/cost/activities/travelling, etc.*

Mother/child relationship

1) How do/did you feel about child: Going to facility? Having to wait/being refused a place? Being at home all day?
2) Does child have: Enough company of other children? Somewhere to play? Does he miss facility?
3) Do you think nurseries are a good thing for: Children/own child? Mothers?
4) How do you usually spend your day? *Is child with you all the time? Any problems coping/amusing child? (child's health/personality.) Would you like more time to self? Does anybody else look after child? Who? When? (Does father ever look after him?) Does this suit you/child?*

Background

1) How long have you lived here? Where did you live before? *Are you happy here? Do you think you'll stay here?*
2) Who else lives here? *Type of housing? How many rooms?*
3) Do any of your family/friends live around here?
4) Do you work? *Where? What do you do? Hours?*
5) Would you like to work? *Why? Have you tried to get a job? Hours?*
6) Does husband work? *What does he do?*

APPENDIX IV

TABLE 41

EXTENT OF PARENTAL PARTICIPATION IN PLAYGROUPS

Playgroups	*Number of children in our sample attending*	*Occupation of fathers*		*Parental involvement*
		Non-manual	*Manual*	
		%	%	
City centre area				
A	31	45	55	All types
B	10	100	—	All types
C (private playgroup)	4	100	—	None
D	5	—	100	Help with organising and to raise funds
E	8	75	25	Minimal
Outskirts area				
F	15	13	87	All types
Rural areas				
G	5	80	20	All types
H	6	83	17	Help with organising
I	12	17	83	All types
J	14	29	71	All types
K	8	25	75	None
L	12	8	92	A few help with organising

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